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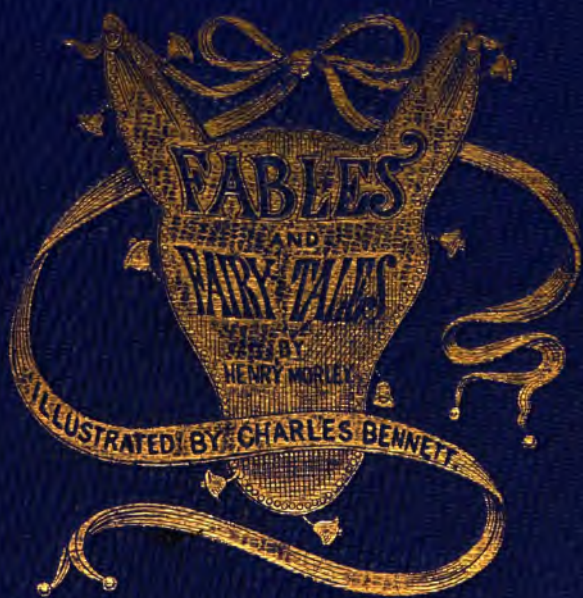
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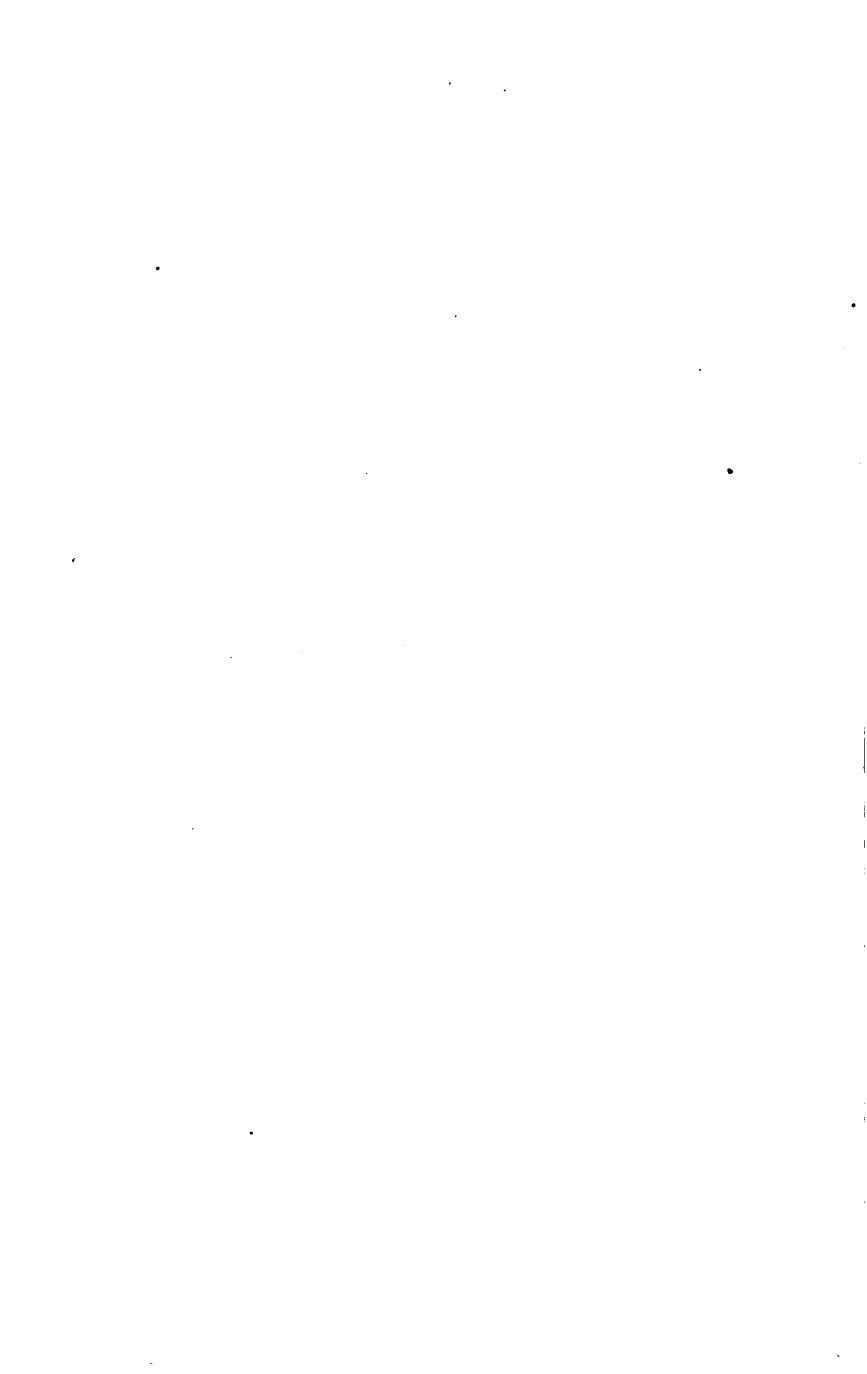




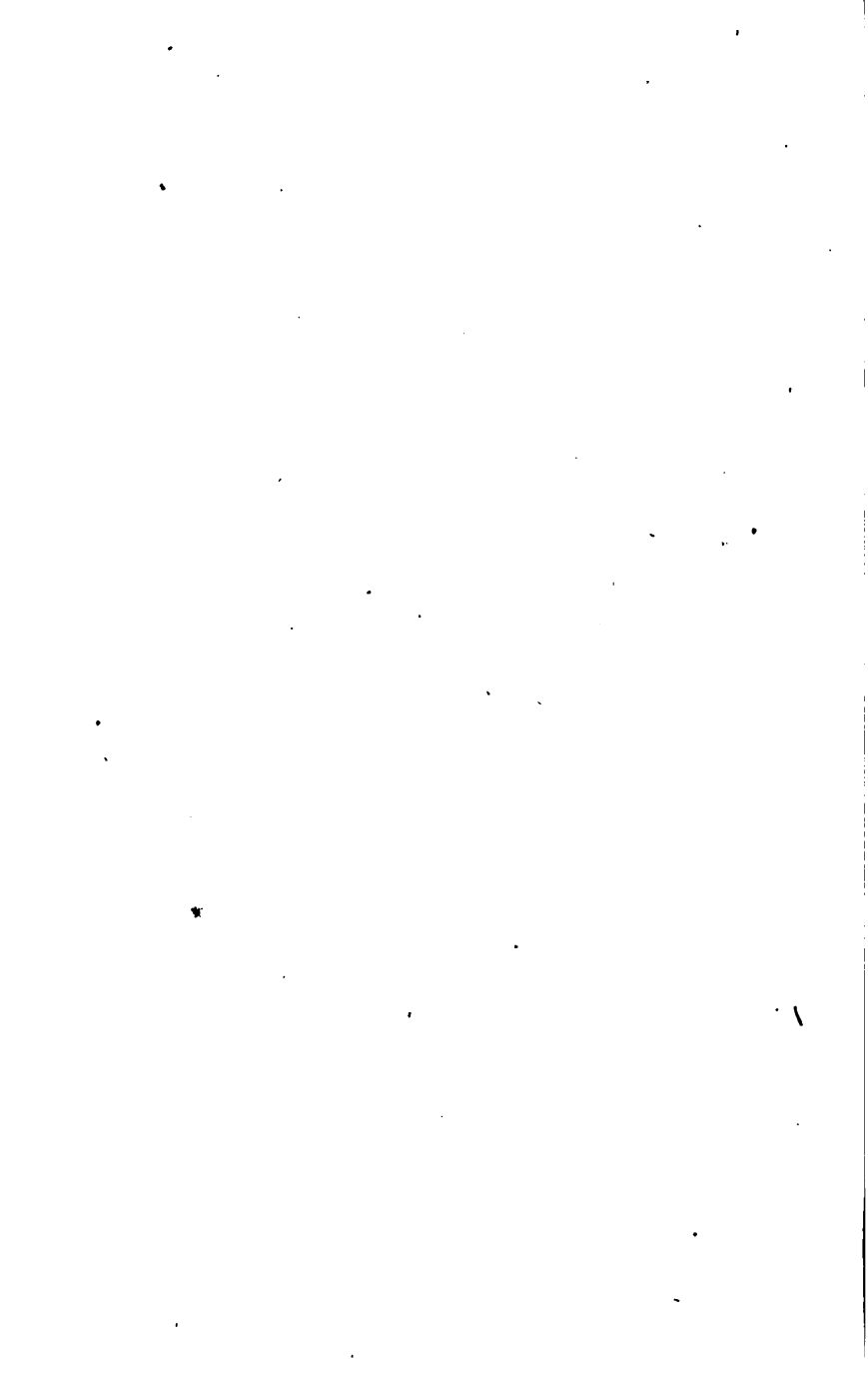
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**FABLES AND FAIRY TALES.**









Hoya, the Giantess, and Sir Aylevan.





FABLES  
AND  
FAIRY TALES.

BY  
HENRY MORLEY.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES H. BENNETT.

"But the good pleasure of an unty'd mind."—HENRY MORE.

LONDON:  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.  
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## PREFACE.

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THE Writer's petition to the Reader of this Book is, that he will good-humouredly accept it or reject it, as a small outbreak of holiday extravagance, and nothing more. At most

"Fair, kind, and true is all his argument ;  
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words."

Labour and jest will have their turn in every true life, and he is not wise who would exhibit more or less than his part in the nature of us all.

Four old Papers have been reprinted with the new matter of which this Book chiefly consists, and they have here to be named. The "Two Guides of the Child" appeared, nine years ago, in No. 24 of "Household Words." "Sirius," written still earlier, is in "Fraser's Magazine" for May, 1854, and has been re-written for these pages.

"The Night Porter," with much revision, and the "Boy's Adventures," with slight alteration, are from Nos. 401 and 466 of "Household Words." There is no other reprinted Tale or Fable; and it may be advisable to add (though, as to such a matter, home-bred wit may give its own assurance), that there is no translation or adaptation from the French or any other tongue.

The Printing, as well as the Engraving of the little Book, is by the Brothers Dalziel, who, for their delicate and faithful work, are thanked most heartily.

4, UPPER PARK ROAD, HAVERSTOCK HILL.

**Christmas, 1859.**

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## THE CHICKEN MARKET.

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### CHAPTER I.

BEN ODY IS RESOLVED ON CARRYING HIS CHICKENS TO A  
PRETTY MARKET.

ONCE upon a time, there was a rustic, whose name was Ben Ody, and he knew more of what is in an egg than that it is something good to eat. He understood how one thing comes out of another. Ben Ody, when he had no more sense than the rest of the world, kept fowls ; and when he grew to be so

wise, he had been carrying his chickens to a pretty market.

There is a woody wilderness in Dulmansland, and few reach to the heart of it; but there is open market held by Fairies in the middle of that wilderness, and any man who gets to it may talk and traffic with the market-people to his own great gain. Ben Ody knew that there was such a market, and resolved to carry thither a large basketful of chickens.

Goody Madge Ody cried down his design. Chickens, she said, were worth three shillings a couple in their own good town of Peniworth, and that was their just price all the world over. He might grind down his legs from under him in travelling to the strange market, and find, she would answer for it, nobody but a fool to pay a shilling more. Ben Ody made answer to his wife that she talked like a woman, and then set out like a man upon his journey.

He had not gone ten steps from his door, before he met somebody who offered him four shillings a pair for all his chickens. But Goodman Ben refused the money, saying to himself, one has not to go far to find a fool. He had not gone ten miles before he met somebody who offered for his chickens four shillings a-piece. Should he halt on his way to Fairy-land because he was tempted by so great a certainty of present gain? Ody covered up the basket with his pocket-handkerchief, and travelled on. The very chickens cried "Cheap! cheap!" to one another when the bargain was proposed. "I

hope for better luck than that," said Ody, as he went his way. A forward young hen, who was of the company in the basket, getting her head, after a little perseverance, through one of the holes in her master's handkerchief, turned one eye up at him, and clucked, "Luck! luck! luck! Ha!" He could not tell whether she spoke in sympathy or in derision. For, to the last, wise as he became, Ben Ody could not arrive at the whole and exact mind even of a hen.

On the first night of his journey, Goodman Ben, when he came to an inn, supped upon juicy steak with oyster sauce, and bought wheat for his poultry. On the second night he had cold shoulder, and fed the chickens upon bran. On the third night he had sour milk for supper, and a very little bread, of which he gave all to his birds. Should he halt on his way to Fairy-land, because he was repelled by so great a certainty of present hunger? On the fourth night he supped at a pig-trough, and slept in a barn, upon the floor of which his hens found pickings. On the fifth night he came to the sea-coast, where a keen wind, blustering from the east, cruelly threatened to cut off his nose and ears. The wild waves champed on the restraining bit of shore, tossing abroad white flakes of foam. Behind the flying foam-flakes the wind raced, like a starved hound, whining. There was rough water stirring eagerly, flashing white lines, reflecting from the tempestuous sky, just quitted by the sun, a ghastly yellow light. But in the west, water and air were heavy with the purple gloom that buried all, and was

not to be cloven even by the stroke of all the lightnings in it. Who could tell when it was from the wind, when from the wave, when from the cloud, that thunder came? In that fierce tumult a man's ears were stuffed with the incessant roar, his eyes filled with the rising of great waters, and the rising also of their own small flood, under pinch of the wind, that had a grip on every nerve. The tongue within the mouth was salted, and all juices of the flesh seemed to be brine. A driving rain began to whip the Goodman in the face. No shelter was to be had in the low red crags behind him, or on the flat, treeless land above. Beyond a gap in the cliffs, far away by a white sea-mark, a boat-house could be seen. But there was between the drenched man and that mockery of shelter a wide wet bog, and the estuary of a river.

Then fell upon his mind's ear the voice of his Goody, who talked like a woman, and upon his mind's eye a vision of the market-place of Peniworth that was now left, a five days' journey, behind his back. The chickens all were become cheerless—cold fowls without tongue. Ben Ody had their basket by this time under his gaberdine, that dripped and flapped over them, a dismal substitute for the warm mother's wing, under which they still could remember how they once were nursed.

Suddenly, through the splashing of the rain, light shone from their owner's countenance. Sore hunger, prompter of his wit, reminded him that he knew, as every man may know, one sentence, at least, of the speech of hens. The hint given him

from the basket at the outset of his journey, which it had then suited his humour to consider English, belonged naturally to one of the languages of the great Poultry Stock, and was, in fact, Hennish for "I am about to lay an egg." "Where," he cried, in his stomach, "is that egg? For eggs are good to eat, and I am desperately hungry." There was a flutter in the basket, followed by a delicate rap on his elbow. Was that a mouse running down his sleeve? The egg was in his hand. "Pah!" said the countryman; "the egg's alive! It can't be eatable." But Ben Ody put the two ends of the egg to his lips, and found one cold, the other hot. Right enough! he thought. So he made for himself a hole in the small end, sucked thereat, and was nearly choked before he knew that what he swallowed was tobacco smoke. What wonder? Again and again had he prophesied to Goody, and said, "Goody, we shall have the poultry copying the puppies, and the chickens soon will learn to smoke before they break the shell." How this young embryo came by his cigars, was only one out of a thousand mysteries of the tobacco trade.

Ben Ody peeped into the egg-shell, and the smoke immediately stung him in the eye. He might as well hope to look down a chimney when fresh wood has been laid on the fire below. Meantime, the wind howled, and the sea roared in his ears, the rain lashed his face, and the salt spray leapt into his mouth, as his teeth chattered with cold. The tobacco-smoke curled up from the egg, like the smoke of a fusee that has burnt close to another

sort of shell. "Next only to victuals comes tobacco," sighed the weary man. "After you, therefore, if you please! my little chicken." A wisp of dead herbage was blowing by, and a stout bit of reed in it caught Ben's attention. "I will have you," he thought, "for a pipe-stem;" and, accordingly, he thrust one end of it through a convenient part of the shell. Immediately a venerable head, as big as an old pea, as yellow and as wrinkled, but having as much white beard as a dozen dandelion seeds, thrust itself from inside through a hole of its own breaking, and cried, "How many more draughts are you going to expose me to, young man?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," Ben Ody said, "You are no chicken!"

"Why are you standing out there in the rain?" said the little man, still in a rage. "How much damp are you going to bring in with you? Now, then, the supper will get cold, as well as you!"

Whether he himself had become smaller, or the egg had become larger, Ben could not then tell, for he had no point of comparison as he stood there in the tempest, with his face towards the boundless sea. Moreover, he was a man on such terms with himself, that in the most reduced condition he could not feel small. He could not, indeed, fail to perceive that his chicken-basket towered high above his head, its wicker sides rising like columns of a temple, in which there were enshrined sublime hens and a cock holding his head higher than any weather-cock in Dulmansland. But, ah! what a fine lime-whited hermitage, tapestried inside from dome to

floor with the most exquisite of tissues, was the vaulted chamber he had taken for an egg. Therein sat the yellow man, and by no means a little man, beside a fire hot enough to have parched his pea of a head (which now seemed to be as big as a ripe pumpkin), and there he knocked out the dead ashes from his pipe before he turned his chair round to the supper-table. The rain splashed and the wind howled outside, while the wide dome that sheltered them rocked like a great ship in the storm. For supper there was a bee's thigh stewed in its own burden of honey; and Ben Ody was so hungry, that he ate slice after slice, and feasted on the honey till his clothes began to feel too tight for him. "Now," said the yellow hermit, "my name's Yolk. You are my guest, sir, and I am your servant. What dew do you take?" Here he produced two round bottles from a cupboard, each warranted to hold an exact unbroken dew-drop. "This," he said, "is Thistle-dew, and this has been distilled on Woodbine Blossom." Then Yolk broke the seal of one bottle carefully, produced a couple of cups, and shared with his guest a drop of Thistle-dew, at which they drank and drank, till prudence counselled them to leave a little in the bottle. Ody hardly knew what he had been talking about, so much had the dew risen to his head, when at last his servant became angry, and began to beat the table, shouting again and again, "Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it!" Then Ben Ody shut his hand, and there were barleycorns forcing their way out between his fingers. He shut both his hands



firmly, opened them side by side, so that he made a scoop of his two palms, and the scoop was at once full to overflowing of good barley. Then he knew that what he had been arguing about was supper for his fowls, and he went out to feed them.

## CHAPTER II.

### OVER THE SEA.

THE storm was over, though the sea raged still against the land, but no star shone. The moon, breaking for an instant through a rift in the clouds, made the wet, glistening shore so light, that one of his colossal chickens, having spied the Goodman as he clambered up the side of a great pebble, mistook him for a grub, and being peckish, made a snap at him. "You would not," said Yolk, laughing at Ben's escape, "have been the first man eaten up by his own chickens when travelling this way to market. You have held to your mind with them, and they are your own. Treasure them. Golden eggs are a mere goose's business to the eggs they lay. But they may eat you up, nevertheless. We are yours, yet have a care, Master Ben Ody. You are ours."

"Dear Mr. Yolk, what must I do?"

"Go on."

"Through the sea, I suppose?"

"Certainly, through the sea. This is the Sea of Trouble, through which you must go, unless you will return to Peniworth."

"But here is every hen as large as a parsonage, and a cock bigger than our parish church. I might well leave them alone to find their suppers. If they grow at this rate, nothing smaller than a sea-serpent will be the worm that any one of them will scratch for. What ship is to carry them?"

"There is no ship to carry them," said Yolk.

"Ah, very well. To fowls of that size, the sea is a puddle. But, for myself, where am I to find a little skiff—a mere cock-boat—what if it were but an egg-shell?" and Ben cast a wistful look upon the hermitage.

"Go on," said Yolk. "I only stay behind to let the fowls out of the basket. You may trust us all to follow."

"The night is pitch-dark, Mr. Yolk. The sea and the wind are buffeting and tearing at each other. Here is the tide rising, and a wave at its first innings has almost bowled me down." For a minute there escaped a ray of moonlight from the storm above; it fled like a white spirit, and vanished suddenly across the waste of surging waters. Under its touch, there had flashed into sight, pale and still, the tall figure of Yolk, with one arm raised, and a long finger pointing seaward.

"Courage, Ben Ody! Dare and overcome! Turn neither to the right nor to the left. Go on resolved, and you will reach the Fair Market."

The rustic put faith in the exhortation, and his heart enlarged within him. "Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it."

"Courage!" Ben Ody cried, with both fists

clenched, beating the waves back as they struck him on the brow. He was among them, and his large tread became heavy on the corals of the seabottom as his frame grew to the measure of his grand audacity.

Sharks leaping about him, worried him as fleas worry a dog. Great whales gathered in shoals, and joined their forces in wild rushes at his legs. As well might earwigs hope to trip the heels of a prize-fighter.

"Mr. Yolk," said Ody, when they were half-way across, "It seems to me that this is pretty night-work for a man whose supper was but a few slices out of a bee's leg and half a dew-drop."

"It is getting to be all spirit with you, Mr. Ody," said the man out of the egg. "Your courage is not of the sort they cut up with a knife and fork. Starvation strengthens it. There is meat enough in a bee's leg to give mettle to the man who is resolved. So here we are, safe out of deep water and sure-footed among the shallows. This rain is but the earth's morning wash; for there, you see, rises the sun over the sand-hills."

"Well," Ody said, "I have had my wash, and now, if I could only polish myself with a towel, give my hair a handsome combing, and brush my old smock and boots and gaiters into something fit to be looked at—"

"Look! look! look! here!" clucked a voice behind him.

"That's the voice of the speckled hen, I know," said Ben, turning upon her. "Speckled! Why,

Yolk, are these my chickens? Was that sea a beauty bath?"

Though a humming-bird grew to the size of an ostrich, and increased as much in beauty as in size, it would be no match for one of Ben Ody's chickens as those chickens now shone down the dawn. They had crossed the water and stood glittering among the dull sand-hills like hillocks of rainbow in the morning rain.

"Three shillings a couple, did you say, Madge? And that glorious being yonder," whispered the rustic, "is my speckled hen, for it is she who has demeaned herself to lay me an egg for my breakfast. Here it is." But as Goodman Ody took it up, the shell broke in his hand, and there fell out of it a small clothes' brush, a comb, and a large towel. When Ben Ody rubbed his face dry with this towel, soft and delicate as any spider's web, though stronger than chain-cable, the wrinkles and the freckles and the stubble of his beard came away with the water. His crooked nose, kneaded up in it for a moment, became as the nose of an Apollo, and his old mouth blossomed again with its early roses. He dug the comb into his hair, and shook out exquisite odours while he pulled the grizzled mat into brown silken tresses. He brushed at his smock, his boots and his gaiters, clearing away all that was rustic as he rubbed. The smock brushed out into a purple velvet robe, enriched with a fine gold embroidery and fringed with amethysts. The gaiters, when their shell of dirt had been cleared off, displayed an inner crust of diamonds, and the old hobnail

boots, which, with the feet inside, were filed down by one minute's brushing to a dainty size and shape, cleaned into easy slippers of rich orange morocco with red heels. At the same time there came a sensation of silk and fine linen over the entire body and legs of Mr. Ody.

"Now, master, that you have done polishing yourself," said Yolk, "will you oblige me with the brush and towel."

Yolk cleaned himself into the figure of a black-haired page in a full suit of amber satin. Still there was a touch of bile in his complexion, but his face was smooth, and the long white bristles of his beard had shrunk into a tender down upon the chin. Upon his upper lip the towel left only a slender black moustache, of hair that might be in the very first month of its crispness.

"There's nothing," he said, "so refreshing as a good rub with a towel, when one has been hard at work all night."

"Except breakfast," observed my Lord Ben. "Towels and combs and yellow pages are all very well, but my intention was to eat that egg."

"Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it. Call for what breakfast you please, master."

"O, certainly. A pint of old ale and a muffin! There, Yellow Page! The muffin is for you—the ale for me."

"May I be permitted to suggest, that if I had as much might in my hands as you in yours, I should know how to choose myself a better breakfast."

"Throw the muffin to the fowls, if you don't like it—

"Stay, I beg your pardon for remembering old ways. At Peniworth I had my morning draught, and Madge, she had her muffin. Hold that muffin for a minute, and keep it as hot as you can, while I shut my hand upon my Goody. There, I have her!" With her mob-cap and her false red wig; her tortoiseshell spectacles; her turn-up nose and the one front-tooth in her mouth; with her old flowered gown tucked up about her waist, and a black petticoat flapping over the wrinkles in her grey worsted stockings; with her feet raised upon pattens, her bare shrivelled arms still wet to the elbows with soapsuds, and a dripping lump of mottled soap in her right hand, while her left hand slipped greasily out of her husband's grasp; there stood Goody Madge.

"Let me give you a rub, Goody, with this towel."

"I'll have no spiders' webs thrust in my mouth. Keep off, I say! None of your play-acting with me."

"After only a week's parting, do you not remember Ben again? Have I not been fighting alone through my trouble, and do I not give you my hand now I am fairly through that sea, and safe to find my way into the Fairy Chicken Market?"

"My Ben certainly left Peniworth on a fool's errand with a basketful of chickens. But if you are he, you're altered greatly for the worse. What other sign am I to know you by?"

"The morning muffin!"

"And that morning draught, I see! But who's the boy?"

"He is the yellow boy who waits upon me."

"What have you done with the hens?"

"Look yonder. What do you think of them? Three shillings a couple in our market-place, and if I take them farther, I shall only find a fool to pay a shilling more?"

"Nonsense, Ben. Fine feathers don't make fine fowl. How will they roast?"

"They glorify me, they give power to my hands, they give me back more than my youth, they grow without food, they are the delight of my eyes; and am I, because in our old market-place nothing but bread and meat is bartered for, to wring their necks and sell them for the pot?"

"Alack! alack! alack! Yah!" cried a voice from the sand-heaps.

"That is the black hen's voice," said Mrs. Margery. "I'll go look for her egg."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THROUGH WASTE AND WILDERNESS.

THE light rain had passed away, and mist was rolling from the earth as the sun rose. Yolk laid a hand on Ody's wrist, and drawing close to him, looked with an awed face landward. On the verge of the land, where the last blades of coarse grass were waving in the sea-wind, the outline visible against the sky was indistinctly broken by the gleam of some white ruined gravestones and the swelling up

of graves. A heavy mist was rolling upward from that undefended graveyard on the border of the sea. Within the mist, and part of it, were solemn shapes that spread themselves abroad, the shapes of ghostly grave-diggers, each with a black mattock in his hand.

"They are gone, Master. I saw them sitting on the shore watching for us."

"For us?"

"Go up, master, and see those graves. They are all marked with plain stones, not a name ever was carved on one of them. Here the storm beats and the lichen grows. This head-stone was beaten down upon its grave when the blast of the night wind shrieked over the forgotten dead. They were all wrecked men whom the ghosts have buried, working silently and leaving not a trace beyond the hillock and a headstone such as these."

Goodman Ody shivered. "This hole in the sand was made for me, no doubt, and I observe now that the shore is lined with heaps of chicken-bone."

"Many a man," said Yolk, "carrying his chickens to the Fairy Market, has been taken dead out of this Sea of Trouble. When the resolve falters in the midst of peril, all is lost. Every man cannot shut his hand firmly upon what he wants. That young husband, upon whose grave the fallen stone lies heavy, had the fondest heart alive. He flinched and died when the salt wave reminded him of tears of little children on his cheek.

Then, as he picked a bunch of wormwood from this grave, there came upon Ben Ody's ear, the



voice of his Goody, crying, "Come down, man! Here's the black hen's egg; only she isn't black, and a pretty egg it is for your fine feathers to lay. It's empty!"

"Stop," answered the Goodman, "stop till I come. Now, crack that egg, and you shall see what you shall see come out of it. Well, Goody, what is it."

"My wedding-ring," said the old dame, "and that is curious. When you were three days away, I was vexed at you, and took it off, and put it away in a teapot. How it came here—how I came here—how you came to be so foolish—what has come to the chickens—who that young man is, and what's coming to us all, who knows?"

"Never mind, Margery, put out your finger and on goes the ring again. Is there any spell in it, I wonder, Mr. Yolk? How do you feel now, Madge?"

"I feel like sticking by you, Ben."

"Then may the black hen lay nothing but wedding-rings, and may I be the jeweller that sells them. On we go. My love's as old as yours, Goody, although the matter of the chickens puts a difference between us. You'd shine like a queen if you would only scrub your face well with this towel."

"I'm Goody Madge, and I don't wish to be transmogrified."

"Then, Goody, you shall not even put your pattens off. So take my arm, old woman, and come on."

The forward road lay through a vast sandy plain, filled with rabbit-holes. The fowls, glittering with all colours that play in the diamond, led the way, and were as a rainbow of hope moving before them. Ben Ody, beautiful in his new youth, walked lovingly with his old wife, who, having shaken down her flounced gown, had wiped her arms upon her apron, put the bit of mottled soap into her pocket, and was carrying her pattens in her hand. She did not care about the splendour of his newly-gotten youth, he did not care about her wrinkles and grey hairs. The bells had rung for them both, years ago, from Peniworth church steeple. There was one memory, one heart between them. Yolk described the road. "These," he said, "were the famous warrens of Mockery on the confines of Dulmansland." Ben was pleased with the ways of the little rabbits that ran out of their holes to nibble and make mouths at him. They were so free with Goody's heel, that she put on her pattens again to protect her toes from their incessant nibbling. They were thus bold because they saw her dread of them; Ben Ody's slippers were proof against all their bites. Shrubs became numerous, in which venomous snakes hissed as they passed. Trees multiplied, and, following their chickens, the wayfarers soon were buried in the great Forest or Wilderness of Doubt.

"By the straight path, on and be resolved," Yolk whispered. Everywhere there was to be heard the roaring of a lion round the corner, but none ever leapt out to dispute the forward way. As the forest

darkened, and the night set in, and the moon threw only a stray spear-shaft of light among the trees, Goody said, under her breath : " I go where you go, Ben, but I have heard laughter at men who took their chickens to a pretty market, and I have some fear of what it means."

Ben answered with a brave word, crushed the bunch of wormwood in his hand, and steadily went on.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MARKET REACHED.

" DID you see that, Ben ? "

" Yes ; what was it ? "

" Flash of eyes ! There are queer people about us in the wood, and they make no sound. One of them ran against me and walked through me, and could not be felt. Hark, Ben ! What voice is that ? "

" The nightingale."

" O husband ! I wish we were well through the wood."

" That's a bold cock of ours to blow his clarion against the nightingale," said Ben. " There is a distant answer. Trumpet music, that comes nearer and nearer. There's a chorus coming with it. Hark, old girl, hark to the words ! We must be getting to our journey's end."

"Make way through the press, O yes! O yes!  
To the never despairing, the manfully daring,  
Market is open, O yes! O yes!"

Then, under the gloomy forest-paths, the chickens all began to shine with their own light. The wood was full of spirit lamps, for every lamp was a Fairy. The glorious procession was seen coming onward like the miracle of a bright sunbeam in the midst of night. There was no light but that which issued from the robes and beaming faces of the Fairies.

On each side of the path the Fairies stood in treble line, face over face. Behind and above these keepers of the way, among the trees and on the trees, a frolicsome crowd made with its happiness a wall of light that shone reflected from Ben Ody in his royal purple, and Madge in her figured cotton gown. Hemmed in by Fairy faces of which every one looked lovingly upon her Ben, a little dazzled by the light, a little troubled with embarrassment about her pattens, the Goody took a firm grip of her husband's arm and happily marched on.

That path led to the open space of the great Fairy Market, which is hemmed in by the dark Forest of Doubt. The moon stood over it large and round, but the whole market was filled in part with its own emerald light from the robes of the Fairies, in part with the white and rosy radiance of their faces, and the glitter of a crowd of eyes brighter than stars that cluster in the milky-way.

Goody Madge was beset by praises of her chickens, and her heart warmed at the sound of merry traffic

from fragrant alcoves cut out of the forest. She felt no more concern about her pattens. Nobody heeded them, and yet it seemed that everybody heeded her and her good man.

“What shall I give you for those chickens, mortal dame?” a busy Elf asked of the Goody.

“Three shillings a couple, Madam, was their price at Peniworth, but”—

“Shillings! what are shillings, you dear friend”—

“Wit or beauty, troth to duty,  
Strength to conquer or obey,  
Heart to give well, soul to live well,  
Such alone is Fairies’ pay.”

“That’s a funny sort of money,” said old Madge, almost in rhyme.

Then another Fairy whispered: “Don’t be eager. Bide your time.”

Goodman Ben Ody spoke with Yolk, and then began to sing:

“All the fowls that hither we bring,  
Body and legs, liver and wing,  
We mean to present to the Fairy King.”

Then there was more music and more chorussing, and in the middle of the market-place, Oberon, who descended in form of a moonbeam, became visibly present on a bed of night-flowers there laid for him. The burden of the chorus changed when in a ring of dancing light the Fairies stood about the royal couch and fixed their eyes upon Ben Ody and his wife, as

they were left alone together in the great space opposite the King.

“To you he descends; you are his friends.  
To the never despairing, the manfully daring,  
Oberon speaks and the world attends.

“Your chickens shall come into my barn-yard, Goodman Ody,” said the King. “What shall I give you more than thanks for them?”

“Only your hand to kiss,” Ben stammered.

The circle of the Fairies closed in on the Goodman and his wife, as Oberon stretched forth his royal hand. Ben stood erect when he had kissed it: erect even when he saw the Fairy King rise from his couch, and bending reverently over it, himself kiss the brown, wrinkled hand of the old Goody.

“Goodman Ben Ody,” said his Majesty, “you that have kissed the hand of Oberon, are minded to go back to Peniworth, and dig with a new strength in your own farm. Out of the fulness of your heart as of your hand, you will deal wisely, liberally, gently, with your fellows. The wiser you become, the better will you feel why Oberon paid homage to your faithful wife. Dame Margery requires none of your Fairy lore. Look down, fortunate husband, into the old eyes under her spectacles, and learn to read in them the greater mysteries of a good woman’s soul.”

Margery’s hand shook, and her pattens clicked together, as she heard these fine things said about herself. It was odd that they should make her think

of her lame youngest boy, the cowherd, and a great deal more curious that he should take that very time to pull the bobbin and come limping in over the stone floor of her kitchen. Never before was known such easy travelling as the return from Oberon's court into the old house-place. Ben, in his usual smock, and with the usual freckles and wrinkles, was only fetching his spade out of the tool-house. But there had been no dreaming. The chickens were gone, and, in a suit of corduroy, a fair-sized plough-boy with a face yellow and seamed as an old pea, there was Yolk smoking his pipe in the chimney-corner.





## THE TWO GUIDES OF THE CHILD.

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A SPIRIT near me said, "Look forth upon the Land of Life. What do you see?"

"Steep mountains, covered by a mighty plain, a table-land of many-coloured beauty. Beauty, nay, it seems all beautiful at first, but now I see that there are some parts barren."

"Are they quite barren?—look more closely still!"

"No, in the wildest deserts, now, I see gum-



dropping acacias, and the crimson blossoms of the cactus. But there are regions that rejoice abundantly in flower and fruit; and now, O Spirit, I see men and women moving to and fro."

"Observe them, mortal."

"I behold a world of love; the men have women's arms entwined about them; some upon the verge of precipices—friends are running to the rescue. There are many wandering like strangers, who know not their road, and they look upward. Spirit, how many, many eyes are looking up as if to God! Ah, now I see some strike their neighbours down into the dust; I see some wallowing like swine; I see that there are men and women brutal."

"Are they quite brutal?—look more closely still."

"No, I see prickly sorrow growing out of crime, and penitence awakened by a look of love. I see good gifts bestowed out of the hand of murder, and see truth issue out of lying lips. But in this plain, O Spirit, I see regions—wide, bright regions—yielding fruit and flower while others seem perpetually veiled with fogs, and in them no fruit ripens. I see pleasant regions where the rock is full of clefts, and people fall into them. The men who dwell beneath the fog deal lovingly, and yet have small enjoyment in the world around them, which they scarcely see. But whither are these women going?"

"Follow them."

"I have followed down the mountains to a haven in the vale below. All that is lovely in the world of flowers makes a fragrant bed for the dear

children ; birds' singing, they breathe upon the pleasant air ; the butterflies play with them. Their limbs shine white among the blossoms, and their mothers come down full of joy to share their innocent delight. They pelt each other with the lilies of the valley. They call up at will fantastic masques, grim giants play to make them merry, a thousand grotesque loving phantoms kiss them ; to each the mother is the one thing real, the highest bliss—the next bliss is the dream of all the world beside. Some that are motherless, all mothers love. Every gesture, every look, every odour, every song, adds to the charm of love which fills the valley. Some little figures fall and die, and on the valley's soil they crumble into violets and lilies, with love-tears to hang in them like dew.

“ Who dares to come down with a frown into this happy valley ? A severe man seizes an unhappy, shrieking child, and leads it to the roughest ascent of the mountain. He will lead it over steep rocks to the plain of the mature. On ugly needle-points he makes the child sit down, and teaches it its duty in the world above.”

“ Its duty, mortal ! do you listen to the teacher ? ”

“ Spirit, I hear now. The child is informed about two languages spoken by nations extinct centuries ago, and something also, O Spirit, about the diagonal of the parallelopipedon.”

“ Does the child attend ? ”

“ Not much ; but it is beaten sorely, and its knees are bruised against the rocks, till it is hauled up, woe-begone and weary, to the upper plain. It

looks about bewildered ; all is strange—it knows not how to act. Fogs crown the barren mountain paths. Spirit, I am unhappy ; there are many children thus hauled up, and as young men upon the plain they walk in fog, or among brambles ; some fall into pits ; and many, getting into flower-paths, lie down and learn. Some become active, seeking right, but ignorant of what right is ; they wander among men out of their fog-land, preaching folly. Let me go back among the children.”

“ Have they no better guide ? ”

“ Yes, now there comes one with a smiling face, and rolls upon the flowers with the little ones, and they are drawn to him. And he has magic spells to conjure up glorious spectacles of Fairy-land. He frolics with them, and might be first cousin to the butterflies. He wreathes their little heads with flower garlands, and with his Fairy-land upon his lips he walks towards the mountains ; eagerly they follow. He seeks the smoothest upward path, and that is but a rough one, yet they run up merrily, guide and children, butterflies pursuing still the flowers as they flit over a host of laughing faces. They talk of the delightful Fairy world, and resting in the shady places learn of the yet more delightful world of God. They learn to love the Maker of the Flowers, to know how great the Father of the Stars must be, how good must be the Father of the Beetle. They listen to the story of the race they go to labour with upon the plain, and love it for the labour it has done. They learn old languages of men, to understand the past—more eagerly they

learn the voices of the men of their own day, that they may take part with the present. And in their study when they flag, they fall back upon thoughts of the Child Valley they are leaving. Sports and fancies are the rod and spur that bring them with new vigour to the lessons. When they reach the plain, they cry, 'We know you, men and women; we know to what you have aspired for centuries; we know the love there is in you; we know the love there is in God; we come prepared to labour with you, dear good friends. We will not call you clumsy when we see you tumble, we will try to pick you up; when we fall, you shall pick us up. We have been trained to love, and therefore we can aid you heartily, for love is labour!''

The Spirit whispered, "You have seen and you have heard. Go now, and speak unto your fellow-men; ask justice for the child."

To-day should love To-morrow, for it is a thing of hope; let the young Future not be nursed by Care. The child's heart was not made full to the brim of love, that men should pour its love away, and fill the little cup with their own dregs of bitterness. Love and Fancy are the wild, natural stems on which the hothouse buds of knowledge may be grafted the most readily. O, teacher, love the child, and learn of it; so let it love and learn of you.

## FISH OUT OF WATER.

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A RICH Turbot was told of a family of perches in Ceylon that, when its native pool is drying up, crawls over land, with open gills, and crosses dusty roads, to find another. An inquisitive mackerel was his informant.

"My dear Mac," said the Turbot, "what possesses you, that you must tell me this? I have long been thinking that there must be, somewhere over the land, much better water than this great salt wash of ours. But I can't walk, Mac. Somebody must take me to it."

As he spoke, a net descended through the sea. "O," said the Turbot, "this is too good. Here is some one offering to pull me up." So he jumped briskly in, was taken up, and carried overland with a great deal of care. The best of water was provided for him in the fish-kettle.

The mackerel, when his friend leapt into the net, swam off, for he supposed it would be time enough for him to imitate the perches when the drying-up began.



## SIRIUS.

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It was no laughing matter, let me tell you, to offend the Emperor Peter.

A courteous Knight was making love to the Emperor's daughter; the Emperor's daughter was sitting at a window of the palace; when the Emperor's dog jumped out of his kennel, and bit the stranger in the leg. The courteous Knight was his High Mightiness the Prince of Candia.

The Prince of Candia was cast into prison, because he had broken two ribs of the Emperor's dog.

Every day, at 6 p.m., together with his dinner, a

wild mastiff was left with him in his cell. He was condemned to fight with dogs for every miserable bone. The daily barking, snarling, yelping, howling, and confusion of a dog-fight at dinner-time, affected his digestion. As the dead dogs were not carried away, the Prince's after-dinner comfort was to bury them. He had to dig each grave with his knife and spoon—very remote cousins, indeed, to spade and shovel—and after a time it became necessary to inter the dead one over the other. This is a worse mode of burial than any dog deserves.

The fate of the illustrious Prince was a state secret. It was known that the Emperor's yard-dog had two ribs broken; that was at once known, because every particle of a nation must be always interested in the health of any member of the royal family. It was known that the Emperor shone out in the new light of a dog-fancier, who cared only for large and wild dogs, which, once bought, were no more seen. It was said at the clubs, and known to the well-informed, that the Emperor Peter was making experiments, and sacrificing all the big dogs in the universe, for knowledge that should tell him how to cure his wounded favourite. That his High Mightiness the Prince of Candia was among the thousand dealers in the contraband of freedom, home growers of honesty, and other vermin caught in the state prisons, the Emperor wished no man to suppose. If a child boldly made tongs of its fingers, it might tweak the Emperor's nose with them; but if it sucked them, and shrank timidly from the big whiskers, there was a big fist down upon its head.

His Imperial Highness picked his quarrels. He fumed always ; but it was only through weak ground that he would tear up with the fire and fury of a regular explosion.

The Emperor's daughter lived in four rooms of the palace, out of which she had never been allowed to pass. No tutors were suffered to come near her, and her maids had been chosen from among the most unlettered women of the city. The Emperor did not intend to have a daughter who would dare to cross him with opinions of her own. It was a child's business to obey, and it was her destiny from birth to be of great advantage to her father, by the contracting of some glorious marriage flattering to him, and for her, also, of course, a great piece of good fortune. Therefore, they had omitted no care to assure her beauty ; and, in spite of patchings, paintings, hoops, herb-vapour-baths, cosmetics, and internal sulphur, she had really become a lovely woman. She cherished birds ; and, because the Emperor's dog had crunched the bones of many of her pigeons, when they had alighted innocently near his kennel, she did feel that her tender bosom warmed with a sense of joy and gratitude when the offended stranger broke the ribs of that unfriendly beast.

The Emperor's dog—his name was Towza—suffered severely from the kick he had received. In spite of the skill of the court physician and the consultations of the faculty, one morning Towza died. In the evening the Prince of Candia was to cross Acheron after him upon a bow-string. In the afternoon,



however, he was missed from his prison, so that there was nobody to strangle but the gaoler. Nevertheless, it was not fair to make the gaoler answerable for his prisoner; because, in the days of magic, it was unreasonable to expect anybody to be responsible for anything. The gaoler had sent in the Prince's dinner, and, as usual, a dog. How was it possible for him to foretel that directly the dog got inside the prison door it would become an elephant, and swallow up the Prince; that then it would become a gnat, and fly out of the dungeon window with him. Such were the facts; it was a kind Fairy who had played this dog's trick on the Emperor. Well, but there are also unkind Fairies. A morose old creature, named Korspatza, span a web between the sun and moon, in the middle of which she sat like a great spider, ready to catch the gnat as it flew upward. The gnat was entangled in the magic web, and writhing under the old spider's poison-fang.

"It is not my desire to hurt you," said this bag of venom to the honied Suzemunda. "Give me the Prince of Candia, and I will let you go. If you will not do that, I shall cause the sun's heat to flow into my web, and it shall be to you for ever as a red-hot gridiron."

Suzemunda left the Prince in the net, and flew away. The Fairy Korspatza, still wearing her spider dress, then seized the Prince of Candia between her nippers, and, fixing a thread to one horn of the moon, let herself down, with her victim, to a cave upon the surface of the earth.

There are some human beings uglier than spiders. Korspatza was changed for the worse when she assumed her human shape. The cave was very clean. Walls, floor, and ceiling were all smooth, and highly polished. There was no furniture. A wise Fairy never has in her room a stool more than is wanted at the moment, and always provides at the right moment exactly what she wants. Therefore, no Fairy keeps a housemaid. Korspatza stamped upon the floor, and there arose a sofa for herself. She did not knock up a chair or stool for Sirius (that was the Prince's name), but threw one of her shoes into a corner. Immediately there sprang up, where the shoe had fallen, a wood fire and a monkey; the monkey picked up the shoe, and hastened to replace it on the Fairy's foot. Korspatza delayed him while she pulled out one of his eye-teeth, and then gave him a rap upon the head, which sent him through the floor directly.

The wood fire filled the room with smoke, and set the Fairy barking with a cough. Every cough, as it resounded against the walls, had a substantial echo, which fell to the ground shaped like a pair of bellows. Obedient to this hint, Sirius took up one pair of bellows, and immediately the others disappeared. Sirius began to blow the fire, but was exceedingly annoyed to find that, instead of breathing with a quiet puff, the bellows barked like half-a-dozen dogs. If he blew quietly, the dogs would only moan; but if he blew with animation, the dogs seemed to be, all six of them, savagely quarrelling together. The Fairy Korspatza, however, dozed upon

her sofa, and did not seem to be at all disturbed by the confusion.

In the meantime, the fire began to blaze, and all the smoke that had spread through the cave gathered itself into a small dense cloud near the ceiling; it parted into a vague shape, shot out four little columns, like the four legs of a spectral cow, and then a fifth, like a short, curly tail; gradually it condensed, took a form more and more distinct, until, at last, a dog—the very image of the Emperor's dog—fell with a loud bump upon the pavement.

“I will have that dog for my supper,” said the Fairy, with a lazy drawl. “Cook it; here is the sauce.” Thereupon, Korspatza threw towards the Prince the monkey's tooth. A large dresser rose out of the ground to intercept it in its fall. “Wake me when supper is ready.” So saying, the Fairy went to sleep; and there stood before the Prince a dresser, provided with knives, skewers, plates, dishes, and a monkey's tooth. The dog was upon the floor beside him, and the fire burned brightly in a corner. Not only was the Prince no cook, but he had never even seen a kitchen.

The Fairy being now asleep, Sirius looked about for a way of escape. The room was a smooth, hollow cube; there was no door, there were no windows. While he looked about, he heard a whip crack, and soon writhed with anger, when, though he saw nothing, he felt how smartly it was laid about his shoulders. That was, no doubt, a hint from the old Fairy, who depended on him for her supper. He would smother her in her sleep; but, no, he could

not. Between him and her there was an invisible wall; and when he ran against it, every brick seemed to be made of the living tails of scorpions.

"Well," thought the Prince, "I suppose I must begin upon my hound. It has to be skinned, certainly, and I shall scalp the brute with a great deal of pleasure." So he put the dog upon the dresser. The whips were no longer plied on him when he took up the scalping-knife. But, at the first cut, the dog began to yell, leaped up, and bit him in the hand.

"This old person ought to give her cook good wages!" cried Prince Sirius. "Now, what am I to do?"

In a passion, he took up the dog, swung it round by the tail, and shot it violently down into the fire. "Now, cook yourself," cried his High Mightiness. But instantly the cave was full of smoke; the smoke gathered into an overhanging cloud; there was the spectral cow contracting, and the dog bumped again upon the floor beside him. Prince Sirius put his hands into his pockets, and looked down upon the creature spitefully. He felt the whips again upon his back. Again he lifted up the dog, and recommenced his scalping. He went on in spite of all resistance; but he made no progress, for the skin removed from one place grew to it again while he was scraping at another. Sirius chopped off the dog's head. The consequence was, that a new head budded from the headless body, and a new body grew out of the trunkless head. There were now two dogs, who attacked the Prince so savagely, and with

so terrible a yelp, that the old Fairy was awakened. She turned on one side lazily, and looked towards the Prince. "I see!" said she. "Well, you may cook me the pair of them." And then she went to sleep again.

The Prince's hands again dived down into his pockets—down to the very bottom. But he cried, "Ah!" and pulled them out again. In the lowest depth of one of them was something curious. It appeared to be a three-cornered note, directed, in a lady's hand, "*To the Prince Sirius.*" He opened and read it:—

"MY DEAR PRINCE—

"I *do not* sacrifice you selfishly. I know what *that wretch K.* will do. You will find this note from *your friend*, and we shall *both escape*. If you draw *the dog's eye-tooth*, and put *the monkey's* in its place, *all will be well*.

"Ever yours,

"SUZEMUNDA.

"P.S. You can *escape with the bones of the goose.*"

Sirius was delighted for a minute, though he was perplexed by the allusion to a goose. Then he remembered that there were now Two dogs. Suzemunda had not reckoned upon that. However, the prince did all that could be done—faithfully drew the tooth of one dog, and put the monkey's tooth into the empty socket. Then he felt no more of the lash upon his back; the knives and forks and plates upon the dresser began working of their own accord.

The other dog was attacked by a set of table-knives, who chopped him up into small pieces, put him into a stewpan, and got an iron hook to take him to the fire. The first dog was more delicately dealt with ; carefully trussed and spitted. As he turned before the fire, he melted into a new form, and before the Fairy was awake, the cookery was over. Two dishes were before the fire. A roast goose was in one of them, and in the other was a rich and fragrant stew. The kitchen utensils then all darted up towards the ceiling, where they ran together in the form of a huge dinner-bell. On this, there rang a noisy peal, while the dresser below changed into a well-furnished dining-table. The fairy yawned and stretched herself, and sat upon the sofa.

"Supper is ready," said the Prince.

"Why, so it is !" exclaimed Korspatza. "Very well ! The stew is yours, I eat the goose. Come and sit near me."

A chair rose on the spot to which Korspatza pointed, and Sirius sat down as he was bidden.

"The stew is excellent," said Sirius, after tasting a mouthful.

"Is it ?" said the Fairy. "Princes are good judges of meat, so I may take your word. Hand me the dish."

Korspatza ate up all the stew.

"May I trouble you, madam, for a little goose ?" said Sirius.

"I have set my heart on goose for supper," said the Fairy. "You may pick the bones when I have finished."

Korspatza left no meat upon the bones, and, after so full a meal, soon fell asleep.

"What do I want with these dry bones?" thought Sirius. "But I will remember the advice of Suzemunda. These are, no doubt, the bones I am to escape with." Sirius therefore put the goose bones into his pocket. The monotonous snore of the old Fairy soon lulled him also to sleep. Presently he dreamed that he was being covered alive with a pie-crust of putty, and awoke shivering. He found himself in the grasp of a soft, limp being, who was feeling about his pockets.

"What is the matter?" asked the Prince.

"Give me my bones," replied the being.

The being tumbled about in a flaccid, powerless manner, and it was evident that he had not one bone in his body.

"I will not give you your bones," said Sirius. "Who are you?"

"I am an earth spirit. In my bones lies all my strength. I was transformed that I might tease you. Restore me my bones, and I will serve you faithfully."

"By what will you swear?"

"By nothing. Only the cats are false, and sometimes men."

"I will trust you, friend," said Sirius. "Here are your bones."

The being disappeared with them, and reappeared erect and stiff.

"By what name shall I call you?"

"I am the earth spirit, Marl. Since you have trusted me, I will be worthy of your trust. But

yonder witch still rules me. Will you remove those ashes ? ”

The wood fire had burned down to a few glowing embers. Sirius swept these on one side.

“Tread upon the floor, master,” said the earth spirit.

Sirius did so, and a door leapt open, disclosing a large box.

“See what is in the box,” said Marl. “I have not power over it.”

“Here is much hair in lockets.”

“Now, Prince !” exclaimed the spirit. “If you are generous, burn all of it. In each locket is the hair of a giant or earth spirit, and by holding them you may retain us all in bondage to yourself. The meanest is too proud to be content in bonds. A lock of my hair is with others in the box. Will you be served by mighty slaves, take that chest for your own. Will you be served by mighty friends, burn all those guarantees of slavery.”

“I will destroy them all,” said Sirius.

“Wise Prince !” Marl answered ; “and what shall I then do with this old tyrant ? ”

“Loss of power shall be punishment enough,” Sirius said, as he raked the embers over all the lockets.

As they burned, shouts of a mighty laughter thundered through the cave, under the sound whereof its walls were split and crumbled into dust. Sirius closed his eyes, greatly bewildered. When he opened them again, he stood under the warm sunshine, on a mountain side. The sunshine was quite



warm, although the rain was falling in a summer shower; and the rain soon ceased. The grass and the trees sparkled, the very clod was contributing its fragrance to the burden of scents with which the slow-footed breeze was laden. Bugle notes sounded in the wood below, to which the Prince was listening, when suddenly a stag leapt up the hill, an arrow after it; and after that a single huntsman galloped forward in pursuit. When he came near to Sirius, he checked his course, and swore a loud oath. Sirius started to the horse's bridle; it was the Emperor Peter.

"Hollo!" said the Emperor Peter.

"Holla-ho!" cried Sirius.

The Emperor blew on his bugle to call together his attendants. The Prince shouted for Marl. Marl was the first to come.

"Can we change shapes?" asked Sirius.

"At once," said Marl.

Sirius sat on the Emperor's horse, and looked like Emperor Peter. Emperor Peter stood below, and struggled, in the shape of Sirius, to pull the horseman down. The train of attendants in a short time came upon the ground. Emperor Peter was carried home for a madman, and placed in a lunatic asylum, where he was compassionately treated. Sirius finished the stag-hunt, and rode home in state.

Early the next morning Sirius proclaimed, in the name of the Emperor Peter, that, whereas he was heartily ashamed of all the evil he had done his people, and in consideration of the greatness of the change he meant to make in his behaviour, he did

now determine, ordain, command, appoint, and institute it as a law, that thenceforth he should be styled and entitled Emperor Peter II., his former self being considered dead.

Peter II. accordingly devoted himself with much energy to the reformation of affairs, and as Peter I. had only been three years upon the throne, it was found possible in six years to bring the state once more into a fair condition.

But the first care of Sirius was for the beautiful daughter of the Imperial house. His delight in her beauty was checked by dismay at her ignorance. He did not fall in love with her because she had no sense, and there is no filling one's belly from an empty dish, although it be of biscuit porcelain. But the reformed Emperor decreed that his mismanaged girl should be set free from her restraint. A hundred teachers were engaged to fill her head with knowledge; but the more they talked, the more they puzzled her. At length, the more they talked, the more she slept over their talking. What could he done? Sirius called for his friend Marl to help him. Marl could do nothing, but suggested reference to Suzemunda. Marl talked about Suzemunda very warmly. "Go then, good fellow!" exclaimed Sirius. Marl went; he was familiar with the way; and came back with a box of lozenges. "The wise teachers must put these upon their tongues—that is my message." Therefore, to each of the wise teachers was administered a Suzemunda lozenge. Now the big books were shut, and the old bookworms pointed with their inky hands to the sea, the sky, the earth.

With lively utterances, they revealed to the young Princess, out of the stores of their knowledge, the delights and mysteries of Nature. History acted its deeds before her on their lips. Strange nations lived and spoke to her; and as she spoke to them she learned their language. Knowledge, no longer crushing Fancy, was upborne upon its wings into the sky. All Truth walked majestic, crowned with the wild olive garland, victor in every contest, flattered with the music of a thousand sweet triumphal songs. Intellect stamped with its grace the maiden's countenance. Her soul was awakened, and had begun the singing of its deathless melodies. Whoever walked beside her, felt that holy thrill.

"Now," said the Prince of Candia to the Emperor Peter, who had been for six years ruling his mock empire in a lunatic asylum, "you may come out. Your house is in order. Course of time has made me king of Candia,—Emperor Peter you shall be again, on two conditions. The first is, that you give your daughter to me for a wife—the second, that you swear to the constitution of your state as now established, and take for your minister the spirit by whose power you are now transformed. He will obey you during good behaviour, and will work you good or evil, as you merit either at his hands."

Emperor Peter was glad to escape on any terms from Bedlam. Sirius courted the Emperor's daughter in his own person, and having, in the course of another year or two, secured her reasonable love, he married her. The Fairy Suzemunda, who was present at the wedding as a bridesmaid (Marl was there, too,

as groomsmen), told the Princess all her husband's story. This he had not himself thought it right to tell, because he wished her father to have all the credit of her education. That Suzemunda did not wish. But when Suzemunda afterwards told the King and Queen of Candia about the old woman Korspatza—how, since she had lost her magic power, she had been living miserably in a hut, and how she was at that moment cramped with rheumatism, they did not rejoice as the good Fairy expected and desired. Suzemunda had some spite about her, for she was a little annoyed when the King and Queen sent nurses and doctors in a post-chaise with orders that the old woman was to be tended kindly. But the consequence was, that Korspatza (she was too obstinate to drink any of the medicines) recovered, and lived to become a very amiable person. The story ends with that, the most surprising of all transformations.





## THE NIGHT PORTER.

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A GAUNT man in a gaberdine sleeps during the winter months on a mattress placed for him in a cupboard near the entrance-hall of The Charles in the Oak Inn; which, by right of him, inscribes upon one of its door-posts this charm, indicative of constant business: "A Night Porter—Always in Attendance."

John Pearmaine is the night porter's name. By

day he is half-witted ; perhaps he is on that account shrewder than most people at night. His only relation, a brother, is an idiot in the county lunatic asylum ; but the half of his wits left to John enables him to live at large. He digs and goes on errands for a market gardener close by, receiving food for his labour ; and, at rare intervals, a shilling. The poor creature is homeless ; and, in summer time, uses his master's greenhouses as sleeping rooms ; or, in fine weather, lies amongst the cucumbers, it being his charge to watch them and the fruit. He is an exceedingly light sleeper, and deserves more pay than he receives, for this part of his service. Should these lines by any chance come under his master's eye, let him say, Dowsie (they call John, Dowsie, which means, in these parts, half-witted—"daft," as the Scotch say), Dowsie shall certainly be better paid next summer, if he lives to see it.

Some years ago the life of this afflicted outcast must have been very distressful in the winter season. There was no fruit to be watched, and little work provided by the market garden. The gardener, indeed, was not unkind, and the people of the neighbourhood did not shut up their hearts. He never felt the want of food except when times were hard, and then, the hand of common charity among poor people being closed perforce, Pearmaine took refuge in the workhouse. But when free during cold weather, the unhappy creature wandered always in no little uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the good Christian who would next open to him a barn or an outhouse for the night, or generously welcome

him to a warm horsecloth and the right of lying down before the ashes of the house-place fire.

The railway station claiming to belong to the next town, lands passengers at the distance of about a mile from it; and, on the roadside between town and station, stands The Charles in the Oak. Passengers to and from the trains go by the door of this modest inn, in omnibuses, which unite the railway to the Biffin's Arms Hotel. All the nightwork that the railway brought us, in the first year after its establishment—and a pretty piece of work the landlady considered that—was caused by one passenger from the mail-train passing at four in the morning, who, having missed or scorned the omnibus, knocked up the house for a glass of hot gin-and-water; and even this customer appears to have regarded the demand as a mere passing joke. But, in the second year of the railway, nightwork was brought by it to The Charles in the Oak, in the shape of a gang—mine host considers it must have been a gang, comprising the select of London burglars—who broke into it; and, without disturbing a mouse, stole from the bar six teaspoons, a tumbler, a crown punch-ladle, several hareskins, a dish of mutton-chops, and a pepper-castor. The rest of the glass was fortunately locked up in a chimney cupboard, and the bulk of the plate was under the host's bed; where it is always kept of nights. I take for granted that no London burglars are among the readers of the book which contains this revelation.

After the burglary, both landlady and chambermaid expressed, after dark in winter time, unusual

alarm. A house-dog was, for their satisfaction, turned loose in the passages at night; but he kept the whole establishment awake for a month, chambermaid informs me, by continual howling. Then, every one who tells the history claims for himself or herself the merit—which belongs truly, I think, to the ostler—of having brought into discussion the superiority of such a watch-dog as poor Dowsie John. It would be Christian charity, said that somebody, to give him settled lodging in the winter; and he was so light a sleeper that the footfall of a cat would wake him up as surely as the biggest gun. The only fault to be found with him as a watcher was, that, if some tales were true, he had been known once or twice to say that he had heard and seen such things as were not to be heard and seen by any of his neighbours—that he had, in fact, like other dowsie people, his delusions. “We all have our delusions,” quoth the landlord, looking towards his wife; and, straightway pluming himself on his own infallible acuteness, he engaged Pearmaine to sleep on his ground-floor during the winter season. Then it was that, by a happy stroke of wit, and as a potent charm to allure the traveller or scare the midnight thief, mine host of the Charles in the Oak Hotel, and—no, not Posting House (the railway had scratched that off the sign)—caused to be written in small black capitals upon its door-post—“A Night Porter—Always in Attendance.”

I regarded this unhappy night porter, whenever I passed him in his cupboard, with a certain awe; and, when I had him up into my room—he had no



awe of anybody—and he sat looking blue, and cold, and hungry, with his feet upon my fender, and his knees scorched by the fire, a glass of punch in one of his long bony hands, and a great rump-steak in his stomach, he scarcely seemed to be a man of common flesh and blood. A shimmer of something more or less than reason played over his face; and, as I won upon his confidence, he sometimes made my flesh creep with the things he said.

He thinks there is plenty of good life in him for a Night Porter's business, though (turning up his elbows) his bones are so sharp. He sleeps in his clothes, and knows when a step is coming; so that he can spring up at once, and have the door open as soon as the bell is touched; or sooner, for the matter of that. Sometimes people look surprised; and once, a man who had not rung, took to his heels and ran. It was supposed that that man was a London burglar. Knowing that they could get in easily on winter nights, and have a light struck, or a kettle made to boil at any hour by the quick hands of Dowsie John, belated neighbours often came at strange hours to the Charles in the Oak; and so the good fellow conducted a little branch of business that earnt at least his right to a good supper all the winter through. The house and all within it was, indeed, of nights, wholly at his disposal; the entire district being assured of John's trustworthiness. He is a man to lie down and die starved upon the floor of a full larder, if the owner of the larder does not say to him, Fall to and eat!

Yes, he had seen some curious things, he says, as

a Night Porter. There did come a thief once—only once—he came under pretence of being a traveller; but John soon had him in grip. Master came down and dragged him off; just soon enough to prevent the vagabond from being throttled before his time. But that was nothing. He would tell me, as a secret, an adventure that he often dreamed over again after it happened, and still dreamed about, and feared he always should dream about to the end of his days.

One December night, several years ago, it was bitterly, bitterly cold. It had been snowing for two days; but it was not snowing then. The earth was white, and the air was black, and it was bitterly, bitterly, bitterly cold. Dowsie John lay in his cupboard, and was kept awake by the stirring of a cruel wind among the snow. By and by the wind fell. There was a dead calm, and John slept till a sound of voices at a distance—beyond anybody else's earshot; but his ears were so very ready—woke him up again.

“God avenge this!” said a man.

“This way to the Charles in the Oak, I think,” said another.

And then one of the two shouted out: “John Pearmaine, put a light in the window. We can't see the house.”

John's light was on the window-sill, and the shutter was thrown back in an instant. They were the voices of two neighbours—stout young farmers, brothers, who lived with their father, and had been,

as he knew, to a distant market-town with cattle. They came slowly, with heavy steps. The candle sent a ray of light across the road; and, through the ray, passed at last the arms of one young man; then, suddenly, the gleam flashed over the pale, still face of a woman whom the two were carrying, tenderly, reverently, dead as she was. They brought her in with blessings upon Dowsie John's quick ears.

"Lost in a snow-drift; cold and stiff as ice. There may be life in her yet. Quick is the word, Johnny, quick!"

The night-porter dragged his mattress from its cupboard to the feet of the two brothers, and they laid the body down upon it, just within the threshold of the inn. One brother darted out again, to bring the nearest doctor to the rescue; and the other, when he saw that Dowsie John had rushed as matter of course to the tap in search of brandy, hastened up-stairs to alarm the house. So, when John brought his brandy to the corpse, he and it were alone. In stooping down to it, he moved aside the shawl, the folds of which enclosed long strips of snow; and, under it, saw that there lay fixed in the woman's rigid arms a cold white baby. The half-witted man knelt down—he never could tell why—and picked away a lump of snow that lay unmelted on its little bosom. "Pretty bird!" he said, and put his gaunt face down, and kissed it on the mouth. Then he turned to the mother with the brandy, and spilt it; because, suddenly, she opened her large eyes, and looked at him.

The eyelids crept down over the eyes again, and

covered them. John turned away to fill the empty glass. At the same moment, landlady and landlord, chambermaid and cook, were hurrying down stairs; the cook with an arm-load of blankets. The body was moved, fires were lighted, bricks were made hot, the set teeth of the dead were parted. To no purpose. The doctor came, and declared that life had been for many hours extinct; putting aside John's evidence to the contrary as a delusion of the senses. The woman might have died of hunger and exhaustion before she was buried in the snow. He could not tell. There was a wedding-ring upon her finger, and the child, which, as it seemed to him, had expired several hours later than its mother, was of about seven months old. The rags that covered them had been good clothing once. In the hope that somebody would recognise this woman, she lay with her child during a whole week at the Inn; and the Charles in the Oak itself, by the desire of its landlady (who would hear nothing about parishes), gave her decent burial.

A week afterwards, a young man came to the neighbourhood, obtained leave to have the grave opened, and was distracted when he looked inside the coffin. He said she was his dearest sister; his bright Phœbe: that she had gone away with a bad husband, who had ill-used and deserted her; that he had lost trace of them till he heard that she had set out from a distant place to seek him in some town in this direction; and when upon this followed news of the bodies of a woman and an infant having been found here, he came at once. This man, though

he looked poor enough (and was indeed a yeoman of small means, named Thomas Halston), paid all the expenses incurred by the host of the Charles in the Oak on account of his dead sister, and gave Dowsie John ten shillings; as insane an act in poor John's eyes as the free gift of a million would seem to you or to me, if suddenly made to us by some chance capitalist.

"I shall face the villain yet," said Halston, as he galloped out of the inn-yard.

"I would not be in his shoes if you do," muttered the ostler.

"I would not be in his shoes if you don't," said Dowsie John. "I wouldn't go out of the world like him, with such a score chalked up behind my door, and never have met with a man willing to rub it off for me before I went."

Two months afterwards, at about ten o'clock on one of the last nights of February—it was a dull night, with mizzling rain, that had accompanied a rapid thaw, and the Charles in the Oak was gone to bed for very dreariness—John Pearmaine, before retiring to his cupboard, was at work over his last purchase of a halfpennyworth of new ballads by the kitchen fire. Intent upon *The Soldier Tired*, he did not notice any sound outside until he heard a shot. It came from the road, but was not very near. He was on his feet instantly, and made all haste to the front door; but after the first bound into the entrance-hall, he stopped. Across the threshold, just as it had been on that night in December, lay—or

seemed to lie—his mattress, with dead Phœbe and her infant stretched upon it. The white snow gleamed among the folds of the dress. All was as it had been once before, except that the dead face, rigid and white, with the eyes closed, was turned towards John, and one hand was lifted from the baby, and fixed in a gesture that appeared to bid him stand and listen. He did stand and listen. After the shot, he heard words uttered by persons in the distance, so rapidly that he could not catch their purport; then a sudden sharp cry, followed by a voice that moaned “Heaven, avenge!” The spectre’s hand flickered slowly, moved and pointed to the door. Its opened eyes shone full into the face of Dowsie John.

After some minutes a step was heard in the wet road. It approached the door of the Charles in the Oak, but John, fixed by the woman’s gesture, stood immoveable, candle in hand, his face aghast. The door had not been bolted for the night. The stranger pulled the latch; and, opening it, briskly entered. The spectre vanished; but the last part of it that vanished was the pointing hand. The person who suddenly had come in damp out of the mist, stood where its form had lain, and shivered suddenly, as though a cold blast from the ground had whistled through his bones.

“Idiot!” he said, fiercely; “why do you stare?”

It was evident to him, at a glance, that no one else was stirring in the Charles in the Oak; and John was for the time an idiot indeed.

“If you have any sense,” said the stranger,

“remember what I tell you. A man will be found dead in the road to-morrow. It was I that killed him ; but his blood is not upon my head. He way-laid me in my road from the town to the station, shot at me, and was slain by me in self-defence. That is my name,” he added, throwing down a card ; “I am known to many people in the town. To-morrow I must be in London. If an inquest be held, give evidence before it, as well as your wits will allow, and say that if they will adjourn over another day, I shall appear to answer for myself before the jury. Take this to keep your memory alive.”

The stranger, who was a good-looking, brawny man, advanced towards Dowsie John, and, tossing a half-sovereign into the dish of the chamber-candlestick, turned on his heel and went into the road again, closing the door tranquilly after him.

The man had brought much dirt into the hall with him ; but, where he had been standing longest, was a stain over which John bent till he assured himself that it was blood. He tried it with a corner of the card, and, sickening at the bright red colour, slunk trembling and cowed into his lair.

Wonderment followed wonderment next morning at the Charles in the Oak. The night-porter had gone to bed, leaving the outer door unbolted. His candlestick was on the floor of the entrance-hall, with the candle burnt out in the socket. There was blood on the floor ; the name of Mr. Robert Earlby on a visiting-card, marked with a blood-stain in the corner ; a piece of money was found afterwards,

embedded in the tallow that had guttered down over the candlestick ; and John Pearmaine, who could have explained all this, lay on his mattress with the sound half of his wits astray.

Furthermore, on the same morning, a body, pierced through the breast, was brought to the Charles in the Oak—the nearest inn—and identified by the people there as that of a man, Thomas Halston, who had come into those parts two months before. A discharged gun was found in the hedge near him, and there were obvious signs of a struggle in the muddy road. An inquest was held in the inn parlour, at which everything was told and shown that could be told and shown. The card was declared by a jurymen named Philips to be that of a gentleman of good character and most amiable disposition, living near London on a freehold farm that yielded him a comfortable income. “He had been at his house,” said this jurymen, “on the preceding night, and had left at about a quarter before ten, in the best of tempers, to walk to the train that passes at ten thirty.”

“How long had Mr. Philips known the gentleman?”

“Only six months ; but he had, before that time, made the acquaintance of his eldest daughter, Mary, when she was in town last Spring upon a visit. As her accepted suitor, he had been lately a frequent visitor at his house, and in his character he had reason to place the utmost confidence. He would not fail to write to him at once upon this business.”

“Is your friend bachelor or widower?”



“A bachelor.”

The jury went to John Pearmaine as he lay tossing in his cupboard; but no kind of information could be had from him. His mind rambled over a great number of wild subjects; but he said not a syllable, insane or sane, of anything that could be supposed to have happened on the previous night.

While they were thus engaged, news came that Mr. Earlbj had descended from the omnibus at the inn door, and was in the parlour waiting for the jury. He was pale and faint, he said, from loss of blood. Pressing business, as well as the desire to submit his wound at once to the attention of his own surgeon, had caused him to persevere in his purpose of returning home on the night in question; but he was so anxious to avoid every appearance of a desire for secrecy or mystery upon the subject of the unfortunate affair, that he had come back, weak as he was, without even a day's delay. He had been the more anxious to do this, because he had doubt whether the message left by him at the Charles in the Oak would be delivered by the person whom he saw there. He explained satisfactorily all that had been seen that morning in the inn; the blood was his own, set flowing by a shot which only grazed the ribs, though it had been aimed at his heart by the man whose body he had on his arrival gone up-stairs to see. The person was a perfect stranger. He must have been a man well known to the police; for so desperate an assault as that which had, in this case, led to the death of the assailant, must have been committed by a footpad of no ordinary sort.

After firing at him from the hedge, the fellow had leapt down into the road upon him, and would, as the deponent firmly believed, have killed him, had he not been provided with the sword-stick, which he used in self-defence.

Every circumstance helped to support the statement of the witness; who, after the return of a verdict of Justifiable Homicide, was complimented by the coroner for the high-minded way in which he had come forward, despite all risk to himself, and for the valour he had shown in the defence of his life against a desperate assassin.

Mr. Earlby went to the house of the Philipsses, and was sought after as a lion by the townspeople. He made light of his wound; which was soon healed. The ball, he said, had rebounded from a rib; his surgeon had found nothing to extract. He was confined, indeed, to bed for a few days at Philips's house with sharp pain on the wounded side; but this was for a few days only, and then all went well again.

Halston was duly buried in unconsecrated ground; and, in a place where nobody had known him, there was nobody to take his shame to heart; except, perhaps, our ostler. This worthy, who cut out a large cross on a piece of an old manger, scrawled under it, with irregular incisions, "Thomas Halston, His Mark," and set it up by the neglected grave. His only assigned reason was that he *must* pity a man who had no luck in shooting vermin. To the cook alone the ostler would confide all that he thought about the matter; but she, too, was mysterious, and all that she could say was, that she

*must* pity Miss Philips. Other misgivings were soon set at rest ; and, for a time, I fear, the hostess was to be caught now and then regretting the new linen of her own that she had given to " the burglar's sister " for her grave-clothes.

The poor night porter said nothing, and knew little more upon this subject. His illness continued till the Spring ; and let even malice declare of our hostess that, if she ever regretted kindness after it was spent, she never grudged it in the hour of need. The Charles in the Oak promoted John to a commodious bedroom on the upper floor, and, by good nursing, helped him to regain his former health with a fair portion of his former wit. Nobody spoke of the affair which had disturbed his mind.

Although incessantly, as I believe, haunted by phantom shapes and such delusions as are common to disordered wits, a strange instinct of concealment kept all mention of them from the scared man's tongue. He lived alone with his ghost world ; and, it was only by chance, or upon the strength of a rare confidence, that any one or two of his experiences were revealed. I may here state that there was one especial reason for preserving silence with Daft John upon the present matter. For the market-garden, in which he found summer employment, lay between the inn and the town. Fifty paces down the road—measured from the gate of the garden, going townward—is the spot where Phœbe and her child were found ; and against the very bank near

which he had been told that she lay covered by the snow-drift, Thomas Halston, when he had tracked her destroyer, stood to shoot him down.

Happily ignorant of this, Pearmaine worked at his summer duties among the nectarines and roses—gaunt as ever. He planted, pruned, and gathered, with the same unearthly shimmer on his face. February long since gone, July was come, and John was capering in his uncouth way down a gravel-walk pursued by Tabby Foll, his master's youngest girl, and a few other little maids. The children were all dancing to the tune of wedding bells that rung through the pure morning air from more than one of the town steeples.

They were arrayed in muslin, very clean, except Tabby, who had twice been on her knees, embroidering herself with gravel. All in good time, came again other little girls in white; and one or two girls of a middling-size appeared by ones and twos, and threes, to swell the group. Finally, and not too soon, Mr. James Foll, the master-gardener, in a white waistcoat, established himself as a telegraph-station at his gate, and began working in a lively manner.

Obedient to signal, all the Fairies disappeared within the great conservatory, each quickly to reappear with a bouquet. Mr. Foll, in his character of Generalissimo, then formed his troop, and animated them with this harangue:—

“Now, brisk! The happy pair are coming. Hide yourselves till I give the word, Advance. None but the brave deserve the fair! Your dear companion,

Mary Philips, she is Mrs. Robert Earlby, now—wife to our noble and courageous friend—the wheels, girls; they are coming! Now's your time! Form line across the road, hand-in-hand, and advance! Pearmaine, take this bouquet—it is *my* token of affection to the bride. Tell her so, when you give it through the carriage-window."

The damsels, bent upon their wedding-freak, formed a white chain, like a living wreath of snow, across the road; then marched forward some fifty paces before meeting the carriage that contained the bridegroom and his bride. Of course, the postilions stopped, and straightway there appeared at either window a group of smiling eyes and lips speaking confusedly a babel of sweet language, while dimpled hands were raining bouquets down upon the laps of the much-honoured pair. The bridegroom leaned forward, laughed, then looked for half-a-minute stern; and in the mind of Dowsie John, who stood aside under the hedge, with the great nosegay of the morning in his hand, a wild memory was startled into life. Unconsciously, his lips uttered the cry that had been wafted to him on the night of his great terror. He moaned it faintly just as it had floated to him through the February night, but struck its very note upon the bridegroom's ear: "Heaven avenge!" Earlby sank back in the carriage. It was not the voice of a gardener's man in a gaberdine; it was the voice of a dead man, as he believed, or of his blood, crying aloud from the place where he had fallen.

The girls and the bride in their glee had not

noticed this. Their happy riot was nearly done, and it was now time for John to do his master's bidding. He stepped, therefore, to the carriage-window, and, leaning with his weird face before Mr. Earlby to present the flowers to the bride, who sat upon the other side, said, true to his text :—

“I am bidden to present these to you as a token—”

“Beautiful!” cried the bride. “O do tell me who sent them?”

“As a token from ——” Between bride and bridegroom suddenly appeared to his sick fancy a spectral face—“from——Phœbe Halston!” he screamed, and recoiled as a man who had been stung. A blow from the bridegroom, who had risen in wild fury, overtook him as he shrunk away; and the poor creature, staggering back, fell under the hedge.

He rose almost directly. Earlby was coughing violently, with a wedding handkerchief before his mouth. It was drenched with blood.

The horses' heads were turned, and the bridegroom was conveyed without loss of time to the sick-chamber. The ball that had not been extracted, had indeed glanced against one rib; but it had been only so diverted as to lodge behind another. The wound, healed externally, had made the more certain way within. Sudden emotion, and the strong exertion of the chest in striking John Pearmaine, had caused the ball to make a fatal plunge into the lung, and set the red blood flowing.

Many a man carries, at risk, within his chest a Lump of Lead that was not shot out of a pistol.



## VERY COMMON.

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“I WONDER you can stand it,” said the Ass to the Owl, who has an enormous character for wisdom. “Just look at your night-work !”

“Ah !” said the Owl, in reply, “If I had but your facility for public speaking !”—

“O, yes ; I can speak out in my rude way ; make clamour enough when I suppose I’ve got a grievance.

But if you would learn oratory, go to our friend the Monkey here. What fluency, what vivacity, what action ! Our people may well bend their brows, and stop their ears, and ask, What can the Ass know ? when I blurt out my feelings."

"Just so," said the Monkey. "You see, my dear friend, you are too obtrusive, and our brother in the ivy-bush is too retired. I avoid everything so vulgar as a cry ; I mix with the world, and—ah—I think I may account myself one of its powers."

A weary man came by, carrying a heavy burden on his shoulders.

"Poor fellow !" said the gossips.

"Poor fellow, you may say," replied the man ; "I've a long way to go, and only wish that one of you good creatures could find help as well as pity."

"Help," said the Monkey ; "of course we will help, for we are all concerned about you. Put your burden down."

The man was ready to do that, and did it.

"Now," said the Monkey to the Owl, "pray, bring the powers of your mind to bear upon this load."

The Owl did so ; examined it, perceived a hole in it of size sufficient to contain himself, flew into it, and made his observations. "I shall ascertain for you," he said to the man, "the character of this mass, very shortly."

But the Monkey said, "Of what help will be all



your abstruse contemplation. The appeal is, in such a case, immediately to the feelings." And so, leaping upon the burden as upon a rostrum, he declaimed with animation upon all the trouble that it gave. Sometimes his speaking broke upon the meditations of the Owl, and tickled him to short boo-hoos of laughter; sometimes the Ass lifted up his voice, and cried aloud.

Then said the man, "Unless we are soon moving, I shall not reach home to night."

But the Ass told him to be at ease upon that subject. "Lay the load on my back, and show me where to go. As for the mere carrying, I can do that for you. But don't disturb my friend the Owl; what a head he has!—and let the Monkey ride a-top of all, and speak. Did you ever hear such a fine orator? Don't mention the trouble of their weight, for they weigh nothing."

The man then laid the load upon the Ass' back. The Monkey was left speaking on the top of it, the Owl sat in the middle, and the Ass plodded below. So the help really was given, and the man had to distribute thanks when he got home.

The Monkey he admired most loudly for his wonderful gesticulation, and his happy way of fixing the attention. The Owl he declared to be the profoundest creature he had ever met. But to the Ass he said no more than, "Thank you, neighbour. I am much obliged to you, though I can see you have a very common sort of mind. All that you have done, I could have done myself, as you know very well."



## BARON BLETCH, OF THE HAMMER.

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### CHAPTER I.

OLD YESTERDAY DISMISSES A LAD FROM HIS SERVICE.

JOE BLETCH held the hammer for a carpenter in Sloley, which is one of the provincial towns of Dulmansland.

Dulmansland is the largest kingdom in the world. The traveller who arrives at the coast and sails over

the sea, probably lands only upon another of its provinces, when he has crossed the water. This country is almost everywhere flat. Its hilly parts are uninhabited, and few of them, indeed, are ever trodden by the foot of man. The ascent of steep ground, or any act resembling up-hill work, is, by the custom of the land, treated as suicide. Its perpetrator suffers exile from the kingdom.

The ground in these parts is not fertile, though it is laboriously tilled. Spade labour alone is employed in the turning of the soil; and at each spade four gangs of a dozen men relieve each other every quarter-of-an-hour. That is because established ordinances of the state provide that every man in the land may have something to do, and nobody may be allowed to overwork himself. In digging, it is the business of one man to rest the spade upon the ground, holding it by the handle. A second man then grasping it by the middle, steadies it under the blows it receives from the heels of two men, one upon each side. Their duty it is to beat its end into the ground. When the spade has in this way been forced four or five inches below the soil, it is the business of a fifth man to bring a rope. This man works very hard, for he not only brings the rope, but also holds it while the sixth man ties it to the bottom of the spade shaft. The six other men of the gang then pull at the rope until the soil is lifted. If, after this, the earth has to be carried to any distance, all the twelve men of the next gang help in moving it, and are allowed an hour's rest after the exertion. All business is done upon

the same wise principle, that allows nobody to be without work, and no man's powers to be overstrained.

Joe Bletch held the hammer for a carpenter in Sloley. It was no part of his duty to use the hammer, or to hold the nails. The hammer was used by the master carpenter, and Joe's department in the business was to take it from him whenever he had struck a blow; to hold it for him while he rested, and to be ready to give it to him instantly when he felt able to strike again.

The master carpenter was desperately busy. An easy chair had been commanded by his Majesty, and there was much competition in the trade for the production of it; because it was announced that the first chair brought to the palace would be bought, if it proved comfortable. For the last twelve months all the master carpenters and joiners in the kingdom had been toiling each at his own notion of an easy chair of state. But nobody was ready yet. Joe's master, commonly called Old Yesterday, was very forward with his work. This man was called Yesterday, from a peculiarity he had of making yesterday's affairs the only subject of his conversation. Every day's business, however little it might interest him at the time, was sure to receive from him on the morrow most deliberate consideration. He always very thoroughly knew what he was about, up to the date of his last bed-time. In other words, being a very prudent man; he never gave his mind to anything till he had slept upon it.

Old Yesterday was very forward with his work;

but he had one great difficulty to contend with. A rule of his trade decreed how many blows of the hammer should be given in order to drive each kind of nail home to the head; as six for a tenpenny, two for a tin-tack, and so for others, in accordance with a carefully adjusted scale. Old Yesterday was not strong in the arms; he rarely drove a tin-tack home at the second blow; and as for the ten-pennies, after their six blows, they still held up their heads in flat defiance. The carpenter was a marked man, and a ruined man, who should endeavour to improve his work by opposition to the orders of the trade. The public, indeed, suffered. It was certain, also, that the Royal person of the King would suffer seriously if he should now venture to sit upon the easy chair that was being constructed for him by his faithful subject. The legs and seat of the chair would tear and wound the corresponding parts of royalty.

Joe Bletch was the most fidgetty apprentice in the world. He stood in the dim workshop, with the hammer in his hand, grasping it nervously, twisting it, brandishing it behind his master's back, tapping his toes on the ground, and sometimes, when all the workmen happened to be gone to sleep at the same moment, dancing furiously with the hammer clenched in his hard fist. The light in the workshop was subdued, according to the manner of the country, for the better rest of the workpeople. Old Yesterday, when he had struck his blow, and restored the hammer to Joe's hand, commonly nursed his strength with forty winks. The boy who turned the gimlet had a right to a short nap

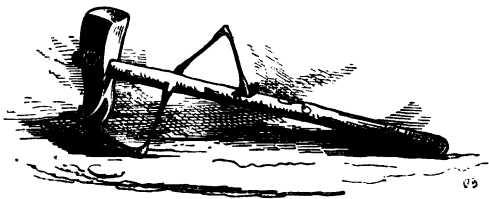
after every twist. The man who planed wood had a right to sleep as often as he dropped a shaving. A bright light in the workshop would make all such valuable snatches of repose impossible for many. It is for this reason that in-door work in Dulmansland is done as nearly as possible by the degree of light which we obtain in nature when the glare of sunshine is beneficently tempered by a fog.

Old Yesterday sat on a stool in his great workroom, winking before the unfinished easy chair. Of three-score men and boys, each bending over his particular work, some nodded and some snored. Only the boy who had a hole to bore by dinner-time had wakened up to give a fresh turn to his gimlet, and he did not lift up his eyes high enough to see how Joe Bletch, who was never asleep, wrestled behind his master. He was wrestling with the hammer, that was pulling itself out of his hand. For three years he had been grasping it nervously, pouring into it through his fists an eager, straining desire to rush forward, and thump furiously at all the nails in all the boards in all the shops in all the world. During this whole time, perhaps, he had been charging the hammer, as one charges an electric jar, with a tremendous power, and at last it was alive. It pricked up its two ears, lifted its flattened nose, pulled fiercely to get its tail out of Joe Bletch's hand; and, free at length, flew at the nails in the chair to beat them. There was a wild din of rapid hammering, that almost roused some of the men. Old Yesterday opened his eyes, and stared before him.

"See, master!" cried Joe, "the very hammer

can't abide it! Wood and iron hasn't patience with it! It was all right yesterday, so don't you be concerned at what you see. If the hammer is at work in earnest, I'm the man to have it by the tail!" So Joe Bletch leapt forward, got the tail of the hammer in his grasp again, and in ten minutes he had hit every nail on its head, and, at one stroke, driven it straight home.

But each stroke was one too many. Bletch was a law-breaker in the eyes of fellow-workmen. They would quit the shop if he remained in it. On the day following, Joe's master reasoned with him upon the excess of which he had been guilty, much regretting that he was compelled to drive him from his service. The account of his wages should be honestly made up, and paid within ten years; in the meantime, as for the hammer, clearly that was bewitched. It could not be retained upon the premises, and he might take it at a valuation, in part payment of what was due to him. Then Joe Bletch went adrift upon the world, to begin life afresh with nothing but a hammer for his capital.



## CHAPTER II.

THE LAD DRAWS HIS KING OUT OF AFFLICTION, AND WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO BE FED ON LUKEWARM MEAT.

It was at noon, upon a dull September day, that Joseph turned his back for ever on his master's door, and with impatient steps marched swiftly out of Sloley. All hands employed in each of the shops had just turned out to pull together at the heavy work of taking down the shutters. Of the greater number of the private houses, bedroom blinds and curtains were still closely drawn. A few detachments of the brisker sort of servants were occasionally to be seen busy at the cleaning of a door-step: one managing the pail and one the hearthstone, one the mat, and one the cloth, three generally standing ready at hand to carry in the pail when all was done. Here and there a sleepy labourer, who had left home before his wife could boil the kettle, was awakening himself at an early breakfast-stall. Joe, as he reached the town gate, stood on one side for ten minutes, while the Stilton mail, drawn by six round horses, came through. It brought passengers from Stilton, the seat of government or capital of Dulmansland, twenty miles distant from Sloley. By this coach came also the Stilton newspapers of the month before last, presently to be delivered at the Sloley breakfast-tables. Newspapers in Stilton appear only as monthly sheets, and usually contain



latest news relating to some early period of history.

When the mail had finished travelling in at the gate, Joe Bletch ran out into the open country and set forth upon the Stilton road at a wild gallop. Weary of restraint, impatient of continual delays, he raced between great ragged hedges gemmed with fog-drops, and the yellow air was wine that set his pulses free. Although the harvest in the fields was partly cut, there was none of it garnered, and the corn might stand. Nothing worse than the fogs was to be dreaded. Anything so exciting as a storm occurs in Dulmansland once in a generation only.

A large party of rustics carrying a scythe to the morning's work, stopped and looked with round eyes at Joe as he flew by them, opening their mouths as if they wanted only time to utter a cry of astonishment. Beyond them the track turned out of the road into the ditch to avoid some unlopped branch of a tree that barred the passage of all vehicles. Joe, who was flourishing his hammer, struck the branch aside with one blow, and raced on, clearing the path of many a hindrance as he went, until his breath failed, and he was at last content to walk. By three o'clock in the afternoon, he had passed over fifteen of the twenty miles between Sloley and Stilton. Then he came to a farm, in the yard of which fagots were being made into bundles. Out of doors there was nobody at work; within the house, the whole establishment was to be seen busy over a great pie. Joe flew at the rough wood with his hammer, broke and tied a pile of fagot-bundles,

and then entering the kitchen, pointed to the yard and said: "I have worked for you, now I am come to eat." All who were at table stared; but the brisk visitor took a plate for himself from the dresser-shelf, borrowed the knife and fork which the master of the house had laid down in astonishment, cleared a place for himself opposite the pie, finished it, and drank all that was left in the beer-jug. Then he leapt up from table, and was out of sight before a line of action had occurred to anybody present.

When he had got three miles farther, and was within only a mile of the great city of Stilton, there was a gay crowd under the brown autumn trees that overhung the road. Nothing in the crowd moved, but it seemed to be produced by the stoppage of a great procession. Every bit of it was as brilliant as fog would let it look, except that there were a few countrymen and boys grinning over the hedges on each side. Here, in the road, were the great trumpets which three men held to the mouths of the four men who relieved each other every five minutes in the exercise of blowing. The trumpeter on duty stopped in the critical turn of a flourish if his time was up, and left it to be finished by his comrade. Here were the great drums, each with the detachment by which it was worked. Here was a tent of state being pitched under the hedge.

"What is the matter?" Joe asked of a staring countryman. "Hee-aw!" was the reply, "It be the King." "The King!" thought Joe. "Am I to see His Gracious Majesty Nodoff the Eleven Thousand and Tenth? I am free. I am loyal. Why might

he not take me into service, as an active lad, willing to make himself generally useful? There he is!"

In crimson velvet robes, with gold embroidery, over green satin body-clothes, with a ball in one hand, a sceptre in the other, and a crown of emeralds upon his head, Nodoff the Eleven Thousand and Tenth, a lean little old man who looked wretchedly cold and hungry, stood helpless in the middle of the road. He had come out for walking exercise before his dinner. The feet of the King of Dulmansland in walking do not touch the soil, neither are royal muscles left to work without assistance. Each of the King's feet is raised some inches above the ground upon a stage of polished silver. The two stages work together on a hinge between the royal legs, and are pulled forward alternately by groups of men, who keep time to the tread of a drum-major. Now the stoppage was caused by the dropping of a linch-pin. The machinery of one of the King's legs had broken down. His majesty lay wrecked in the middle of the road. The whole escort was at a stand-still. The tent of state was being raised for the privy council that was summoned to decide on measures to be taken in this great emergency. The order of state to the blacksmith or silversmith by whom the King was to be set up again, must pass through several hands. It was feared, indeed, that among the necessary counter-signatures to it, was that of a great lord who happened then to be upon the frontiers, four thousand miles away. The difficulty of the position was immense. It was, in fact, a great political

crisis. Joe Bletch, quick of wit as of ear, picked up some knowledge of the truth as he pushed through the crowd, and when he reached the King, fell on one knee before him to make dutiful obeisance, saying, "Mercy, O King!" Then rising suddenly, he seized his Majesty by the leg that had cast, so to speak, its silver shoe. Having apparently no more regard for his Sovereign than if he were indeed a horse, the carpenter's lad plied his hammer dexterously, and repaired the broken works. Then kicking aside the escorts, he seized the two ropes in one hand, and hurried on. The foremost part of the procession scrambled out of his path as Joe Bletch steamed towards Stilton, tugging the King after him.

A child pulling a toy horse or donkey by a string, could not go forward with greater glee or less embarrassment than Joe felt as he drew his Majesty through the main streets of Stilton. Of the streets nothing was visible but a few lights glaring out of house windows into utter fog.

There is a great building in Stilton of which the dome is one huge globe, and all below is a grand structure, massive as if it had been hewn out of a rock, of vast extent, but entered by broad gates of adamant that never have been opened. It is not a true temple, for it is a place of dread rather than worship. They have called it for many centuries the House of the Future, and a fairy giant is supposed to live in it. If so, he is a giant who keeps close at home. No man had ever seen him, none who listened at the house-gates ever heard a stir within. The building is so vast, that in fine

weather its tall gates of adamant shine abroad over the housetops into the distant country, and even the fog is streaked by them with a quivering of silver light. The silver gleam is seen below the glare of the great dome, which shines always blood-red through fog and darkness. Joe Bletch had heard of this great house, and now he saw the fog over his head red with the glow of its great dome, but thought little of that. His whole care was to wheel the King up safely to his palace gate.

When he had reached the gate, he patiently rang three times at the palace bell, as he would have rung three times at the bell of any gentleman in his provincial town, where it is law among servants that no bell be answered until after the third ring. He had not allowed for the refinements in a royal house, whereof it was considered shame for any porter to attend to a bell that had been rung less than a dozen times. After the fourth ring, Joe Bletch, observing how the fog hung on the royal whiskers, and the cold painted in blue and red the royal countenance, took out his hammer, and with one stroke on the lock, broke the gate open.

Within there was a long broad flight of lamp-lighted stairs, on which there were to be seen crowds of footmen dressed in silk and cloth of gold, but there was not one of them who had not a hole in his coat or a rent in his stocking. When these people saw the king, they made obeisance to him, but they did no more. Joe Bletch seeing that no help was to be had, removed the walking apparatus from the royal foot, hoisted King Nodoff the Eleven Thousand

and Tenth upon his shoulders, and so, running upstairs into the palace, carried the monarch pick-a-back into his dining-hall. Dinner was laid. It was three hours past the royal dinner-time, and therefore everything was just ready. Joe was about to put the King in his chair, when he observed that a sharp metal crown which had been one of the ornaments of the chair-back had fallen into the middle of the seat. He took it up before he placed the King upon his cushion, and as he did so, a sigh of happiness escaped the royal breast. A year ago, that crown, which was the uppermost knob of the chair-back, had fallen into the seat of the King's chair. It was an incident which could be dealt with upon no existing precedent. Whose duty it was to pick the crown out of the chair, was still a point referred to the state lawyers, and in the meantime the King had been obliged, for the last twelve months, to sit uneasily upon it. The order for an easy chair of state, to be produced as soon as possible, had been a special mandate consequent upon this dangerous position of affairs. Joe did not know what service he had done his King when he picked up the crown and gave a good shake to the chair-cushion before setting his Majesty down at the head of his dinner-table.

The guests and grand officers of state were all left in the road, but a sign of the King's finger to the Knight of the Diamond Ladle, who stood in attendance, set the cooks in action, and the soup had in fact already been during the last hour upon its way from hand to hand, with all solemn formality,

towards the royal presence. So perfectly was dinner ready, that even the fish, having been dressed an hour ago, was on its way through the town to the bureau of the Silver Strainer of the Fish Kettles. The soup came as usual before his Majesty in a lukewarm condition, with a film of white fat on the surface.

Then Joe, prostrating himself, kissed the King's foot, and said, "Mercy, O King!" and thereupon, suddenly jumping up, he turned to the Knight of the Diamond Ladle, who stood fast asleep behind the throne, took his great badge of office, which hung by a chain of pearls about his neck, and dipping it into the soup tureen, carried a ladleful of the cold soup towards the fire. There making a warm hole among the coals with the King's sceptre, the best poker he could find, he set the soup simmering among the diamonds, while he toasted upon a gold carving fork a slice of bread, and heated the King's plate. Then he cut into the hot plate the warm toast, poured over it the boiling soup, and took it to the King, whose nostrils were expanded, and whose eyes were watering. King Nodoff, in his eagerness, even made an absurd and ineffectual attempt to feed himself. Joe hung the diamond ladle, something the blacker for the duty it had done, once more about the neck of its Knight, who still was asleep, then tucked a napkin under the King's chin, and fed him carefully, blowing and tasting every spoonful that he gave in order that the royal mouth might not be burnt, although the royal stomach should be comforted.

It was not etiquette for the King of Dulmansland

to speak to an untitled subject. He looked meanings, councils were held for the interpretation of his looks, and the interpretation in a given case having received the sign manual, was reported down from office to office, until it reached an office low enough to give a common answer to a common man. But now King Nodoff, looking at Joe, murmured, "Baron Who?"

"No Baron, Majesty. A turned-off carpenter's boy, Joe Bletch; but you must not choke. Your business just now is to swallow, not to talk."

The King relapsed into silence, finished his soup, and looked resigned again, when six servants, in cloth of silver, entered with the dish of salmon that had been through six government offices since it was taken hot out of the kettle. Then Joe, prostrating himself, kissed the King's foot, said "Mercy, O King!" and thereupon, suddenly jumping up, he flew at the First Lord of the Ruby Gridiron, who was picking his teeth at the stair-head, and tore from his hand the long gold rod, surmounted by the Ruby Gridiron, that was his wand of office. Delicately taking a few cutlets from the side of the salmon, he placed them on the gridiron, turned them carefully, made cunning use of hot pepper and sundry sauces, warmed a plate, and presently was comforting the King with salmon cutlets, hot and savoury, that made his eyes to shine.

"Thank you," the King said, "Baron Bletch."

"Joe, may it please you. I am not a Baron—but don't talk. How can you tell what you are eating, if you give your mind to talk?"



The attendants at the table seemed to be surprised. But the position of affairs was so entirely new, that nobody perceived in what way it was possible to interfere. An unsophisticated little page appeared very much to enjoy all these performances, and expressed sympathy enough to induce Joe to trust him with the business of administering to the King a proper quantity of wine. "Keep him happy," said Joe, "till I can be ready for him again." His Majesty, after the first vain effort to feed himself, had resumed his ball and sceptre. The sceptre Joe already had borrowed. He now borrowed the ball. "You don't want it," he said to the King, "and if you like mashed potatoes, it's the very thing to rub them down."

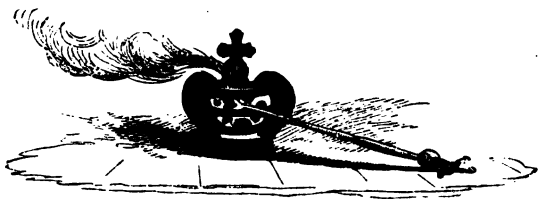
So Joe Bletch rubbed down four or five potatoes with a piece of butter, carefully breaking every lump with the great ball of state, and then put them before the fire to brown, standing a gold dish-cover upon its side to serve as a Dutch-oven. Presently, fixing upon a half-cold haunch of mutton, he cut off three or four choice slices, broiled them delicately, sauced them with hot port wine, and then wound up the royal dinner with a marrow-bone and a Welsh rare-bit, while the small page moistened the royal lips with wine. "Mercy, O King!" said he, "the game and puddings were past mending, and the other things I do not understand."

"Baron Bletch," sighed the King, laying his hand gently upon Joe's clasped fingers as he knelt before him, "it is the first hot dinner I have ever eaten." It would not have taken a state council

many months to understand the King's looks at that moment.

And at that moment the councillors were at hand. Eighteen rings at the bell had already been heard, the general astonishment of all the servants causing more than usual delay in the attendance.

Joe Bletch, guilty perhaps of high treason, was fingering the hammer in his pocket, and prepared to rush through all impediment if danger threatened. "Remain!" said the King. Joe stood by the King's chair. The grand officers of state began to enter wearily, for they were very tired after the severe exercise they had been taking. They stared vacantly at the rude-looking lad who stood by the side of Nodoff the Eleven Thousand and Tenth, at the golden ball in the potatoe dish, and at the sceptre, which had inadvertently been left to become red-hot in the fire. But the King, laying his right hand upon Joe's shoulder, said to them, "My best friend, Baron Bletch." Knowing then that there stood before them the King's favourite, they all, grand councillors and Lord Chamberlains, Stewards and lacqueys, made obeisance when they heard the Baron's name.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE HOUSE OF THE FUTURE.

THERE was nobody in the King's court who could make head against the Baron Bletch. No office was given to him, but his common title was the King's Right Hand. Everything that hammering could mend, his hammer mended. The King's dinner was always hot, because the Baron cooked and served it. The holes in the royal coat were sewed up, in a minute, by the Baron's fingers. Everything that the King wanted, he could have at once, because the Baron, setting aside the whole train of attendants, himself set off instantly to fetch it. The King took from him private lessons in the art of walking by the use of his own legs, was enticed to be talkative in private, and provoked even to set at defiance, one after another, many of the obstructive forms with which his state had formerly been burdened. The carpenter's lad, raised above his station, taught his Majesty a set of vulgar phrases, which were introduced at court. The drawling of such exclamations as "Go at it!"—"If it has to be done do it!"—"Hammer at it!" became fashionable in polite saloons, and were familiar on royal lips, although they represented nothing that was really thought or properly intended to be done.

The crowning incident in Joe's life gave peculiar significance for many years to any phrase drawn from the use of the hammer.

"Mercy, O King!" said the Baron one day when he was alone with Nodoff the Eleven Thousand and Tenth in his own private cabinet. "To serve you truly, I must leave you."

"Never!" the King said. "You have been with me a year. Forsake me now, and I shall die of indigestion."

"By the life of my hammer," said the Baron, "I must go. See how it sets back its ears, two serpent eyes gleam restlessly above its nose. I cannot hold it in."

"What does your hammer want?" the king asked. "Is it starved? How many bags of nails a-day will satisfy its appetite?"

"Our longing is," said Joe, "to beat upon the gates of adamant and open the House of the Future. Old prophecies, you know, promise great blessings to your kingdom in the day when those gates open. My arm feels that this hammer will serve for a key to them."

"Humph!" said the King, "You will have to knock a good many times before you will get that door opened. It is something stouter than the palace gate."

"I will beat those gates while I live," said Joe, "I wish to do the utmost for my King and country."

"They never will be opened," the King said, and whimpered as he added, "You will never leave me to such gravy as I had before you came. Respect my soup, if you care nothing for my feelings."

Baron Bletch supposed that he should be able to

beat open the gates of adamant in a few days, so strong was his faith in the power of his hammer. It was agreed, however, that,—as he might need to achieve the great adventure to which he desired to pledge himself, by constant perseverance,—three hours in every day, and one of these the dinner-hour, should be reserved for duty at the palace. Joe Bletch would have liked nothing better than to go forth quietly and simply upon his appointed work and take his own chance of success or failure. But King Nodoff demanded that the work should be inaugurated as a public undertaking with all due pomp and solemnity. A feast was held, a grand procession was formed, ceremonies were gone through before the massive shining gates, and when Joe struck his first ineffectual blow, drum and trumpet sounded, and a gratulatory ode, written by the court poet, was sung by the King's minstrels. Then the King ordered it to be proclaimed that Baron Bletch was thenceforth to bear addition to his title, and was to be known by all heralds, through future time, as Baron Bletch, of the Hammer.

When the ceremonies were at an end, many great lords waited with their retinues to see the opening of the great gates of adamant at which the Baron thumped and thundered. Not a splinter came away, not even a spark flew; wet fog thickened. Now and then, visible against the silvery glimmer from the gates, the Baron's magnified arm wielding a black distorted hammer, surged up and down through the mist. Whether the great lords stayed long to hear the thumping is not known. The fog covered them

and made a secret of their movements. For nine years the Baron persevered. His title of honour fell into a word of scorn. Baron Bletch of the Hammer, who had set out on his work among the trumpeting and the triumphal odes, became the jest of Dulmansland. The King preferred cold soup to his society. The Baron was allowed to occupy a hovel near the gates of the great House of the Future. The lurid globe glared down on him of nights; the fog entered his wretched cell. People who came by, if they noticed him at all, gaped as they might gape at the town idiot; of course the children mocked at him. Also there was a fair woman who laughed.

She sat upon a great stone at his hovel door, when he first noticed her, wrapped in a thick dress, and shivering in the fog, crooning a ballad, as he thought. So he turned round and said to her, "I am poor. I have nothing for you. Nothing for myself, except this right arm and the hammer." Then he continued knocking at the adamant gates more stoutly than ever, and it was long before his ear caught foolish words upon the woman's music that were oddly timed in concert with his blows:

"At a rock you knock, and the echoes mock.

Never stock, never lock, by the shock

Is harmed.

By the glamour of the clamour of the hammer

I am charmed.

Joe turned to look at her again. From under the hood of the thick grey cloak there looked a kindly pair of clear blue eyes from the most exquisite face

he had ever seen. Golden locks of hair strayed out of their prison in the woollen hood. The broad smooth forehead, busy mouth, and dimpled cheeks had not a trace of care in them, though the nose evidently was a little pinched by cold.

"Who on earth are you?" asked the Baron.

"Nobody on earth," she said. "In Fairy-land handmaiden to the queen. You will have Oberon down to you if you keep up that knocking."

"Fables!" cried Joe, and turned back to his hammering. When he looked next, the fair damsel was gone; but after this day she often sat and watched him from the stone by his cell-door, teasing him and singing at him. Thus for another seven years he worked on.

When he was most wretched he never slacked in a day's toil with the hammer, although never once had the gate stirred, or a splinter fallen, or a spark been struck. The Fairy at last came to him daily. A great necromancer, she said, had prophesied to her that all work and no play would make Joe a dull boy. So she declared herself his playmate. One morning, surprised by the sun upon his bed of straw, the Baron scrambled up in haste. His playmate, who was on the ground before him, peeped in at the door, singing, not quite so merrily as usual:

"Up we start, and off we dart.

The way to be strong is to labour long.

Flourish your hammer, go on with your clamour;

Thump out your hammer-head, thump out your heart."

Joe's heart really was thumping painfully.

"Playmate," he said, "Mock me in jest, but not in earnest. Let all the land scorn me; you, playmate, know in your soul that I toil to bless it. Heaven love you for the happy face that has been comforting me with a show of mockery over a truth of sympathy, and—and— You know *I* love you, Playmate; but I must work on. The hammer till death is my fate, and may God pardon my sin if I have chosen ill. O, my good little Fairy, pity me, if you can do no better. Anything but a voice of scorn to-day out of the only lips that never spoke to me in scorn before." Joe rubbed his eyes, and grasped his hammer, and beat savagely upon the gates. Playmate sat still on her stone, and sang in a low voice that he heard, because he loved it, even through his loudest knocking:—

"Will this hammerer never discover  
His need of a morsel of aid.  
The touch is light,  
That doubles might;  
Over the face of her lover  
Light is the breath of a maid."

"What do you mean, Playmate, my darling, what do you mean?" cried poor Joe, suddenly stopping in his work.

"I have been scolded for you, my Lord Baron," said the Fairy. "Oberon said he must reason with me when he came in, last night, to my mistress: and he told me that it was beneath the dignity of a grand Fairy to shiver about for seven years in a fog upon earth, while an idea was finding its way through



anything so thick as a mortal's head. He was pleased to approve of you, but —"

"You will be more than playmate?—helper?—wife?—all Fairy as you are; and I, poor toiling idiot," said Joe, "what have I done that I should win such love as yours, when all the glory of your Fairy-land was at your feet?"

"Have I not said that—

"By the glamour of the clamour of your hammer  
I was charmed?"

"If you mortals only loved and cherished play as much as we know how to love and honour work, there would be many marriages between us. So, master, let us content the heart of Oberon. He gave me these two rings, and said, 'If they are not to-night upon the fingers of the Lord of the Hammer and his Playmate, visit earth no more.' The air is full of Fairy witnesses. What say you, Baron?"

"With this ring I thee wed,  
Merry heart to busy head."

Joe plighted troth by stammering her words after her, and innumerable silver bells took up their jingle. There were low, happy sounds about him, and there was a rustling as of wings amidst the fog, but he saw only his Playmate, with the ring upon her finger. "Now, husband," she said, "I am strong through you, and you through me. Come to these gates, and let us try their temper once again. Only remember, I am nothing, if you do not ply the hammer by my side."

They went together to the adamantine gate. He thundered, and she sang :—

“Jest and earnest, song and clamour,  
Working now in fellowship ;  
The Fairy Wife to the Lord of the Hammer  
Opens the gate with a finger-tip.”

But when the adamantine doors of the House of the Future were thrown open, the outer throng of Fairies became visible, and within there was seen a vast hall opening into many chambers, lighted by the purest sunshine. Its walls were painted over with innumerable pictures of scenes yet to be enacted upon earth ; and in these pictures the figures lived and moved. But all eyes were first upon the mighty figure of the giant who sat in the midst of the hall, covering half its pavement with the sweep of his great robe, burying one hand in the folds over his bosom, and, with arm uplifted, bearing the weight of the vast globe that was the outer dome of the whole building. Of that globe the old, dull red glow broke into rainbows ; and then, as if the Hope of the World were rekindled in it, streamed rays of intense light across the land. The fog was pierced, and rained down in rich odours. Far away in the open country, dead leaves on the autumn trees were green again, and fresh blossoms opened upon the withered stalks of flowers. The townspeople saw that the gate of the House of the Future had, at last, been opened, and, awakened by the light upon their faces, hurried briskly to the spot. They did not see the Fairies, who were keeping holiday

about the newly-married pair. They did not see the Baron. Oberon had laid a hand upon the bridegroom's shoulder, and had whispered to him that he should pass with his bride over the threshold of the Gates of Adamant, and make the house their own.

There were bright eyes, and ruddy cheeks, brisk voices, and busy heads in Dulmansland, for a whole day. At night, the adamantine gates turned slowly back upon their hinges. Fogs rolled back over the sullen plain, the green leaves withered again, and the blossoms fell.

Doubtless, the Lord of the Hammer and his Fairy bride live happily in the Halls of the Future. It is said that they are to throw open their house, and perform great works with the help of the Fairy Giant, who is their companion, in the reign of King Nodoff the Ninety Thousandth, who is yet to come.



## THE ARCHITECT.

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A MAN possessed a piece of woodland near a rock. He cut down trees.

"Faugh!" cried a rook. "You fell the trees in which you could have rested. Had you come to me I could have let you know the use of trees."

"I have a house to build," said the man.

"Well," said the rook. "Sticks and straws can be had without cutting the trees down, I believe."

The man hewed at the rock. Capricorn looked down from above and grinned over his beard as he called his brother goats about him. "Ah, ha!" he said, "observe that creature's low comprehension of this glorious rock, with its mosses and its grassy clefts. He cuts it into little squares! Look at his piles of little squares, and not even a blade of grass on one of them! All the goats bleated at the man in mockery, and Capricorn cried to him, "Come up, fellow, and we who are at home among the rocks will teach you something."

"Pardon me, hoary father," said the man, "I have a house to build."

The man heaped lime together and fetched water from a pool in which some geese were swimming. "S-s-see," said the gander, "how you splash me, and befoul the water too. What do you want?"

"Excuse me, gaffer gander," said the man. "I have a house to build."

"A house to build!" the gander said. "You don't build houses of water, I suppose!" All the geese hissed at the man for his folly, but he drew the water that he wanted.

"A pretty mess you're making of it!" said a spider to the man when he was stirring up his mortar. "House, do you say? Look at my architecture and compare it with that heap of slime. You would have saved yourself much shame if you had only come to me for an idea."

The man dug at the foundations of his house and struck wrath into the hearts of all the moles. "Why," one of them asked, "are you interfering in this manner with our ancient right of way?"

"Pardon me, brother mole, I have a house to build."

"Hear him! A house to build. Is there a mole of you who does not know that houses are built up into the air? Behold a being with brains topsy turvy, who is building down into the ground! Out with him!"

All the moles showed their teeth in vain; the man dug on. When he had laid a sure foundation, with the stones and timber he built an abiding place. And the house that he had built remained to be the glory of his children's children.



## DROPPED FROM THE CLOUDS.

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FAR in the West there is a land, mountainous and bright of hue, wherein the rivers run with liquid light ; the soil is all of yellow gold ; the grass and foliage are of resplendent crimson ; where the atmosphere is partly of a soft, green tint, and partly azure. Sometimes, on summer evenings, we see this land ; and then, because our ignorance must refer all things that we see to something that we know, we say it is a mass of clouds made beautiful

by sunset colours. We account for it meteorologically, while the very children know that this glorious land is a world inhabited by Fairies. Few among Fairies take more interest in man's affairs than those flighty Cloud-Country People.

Hundreds of years ago, there were great revels held one evening in the palace of King Cumulus, the monarch of the western country. Cirrha, the daughter of the King, was to elect her future husband from a multitude of suitors. Cirrha was a maiden, delicate and pure, with a skin white as unfallen snow; but colder than the snow her heart had seemed to all who sought for her affections. When Cirrha floated gracefully and slowly through her father's hall, many a little cloud would start up presently to tread where she had trodden. The winds also pursued her; and even men looked forth admiringly whenever she stepped forth into their sky. To be sure, they called her Mackerel and Cat's Tail, just as they call her father Ball of Cotton; for the race of man is a coarse race, and calling bad names appears to be a great part of its business here below. Before the revels were concluded the King ordered a quiet little wind to run among the guests, and bid them all come close to him and to his daughter. Then he spoke to them as follows:—

“Worthy friends! there are among you many suitors to my daughter Cirrha, who is pledged this evening to choose a husband. She bids me tell you that she loves you all; but, since it is desirable that this, our Royal House, be strengthened by a fit alliance with some foreign power, she has resolved

to take as husband one of those guests who have come hither from the principality of Nimbus." Now, Nimbus is that country, not seldom visible from some parts of our earth, which we have called the Rain Cloud. "The subjects of the Prince of Nimbus," Cumulus continued, "are a dark race, it is true, but they are famed for their beneficence."

Two winds, at this point, raised between themselves a great disturbance, so that there arose a universal cry that somebody should turn them out. With much trouble they were driven out from the assembly; thereupon, quite mad with jealousy and disappointment, they went howling off to sea, where they played pool-billiards with a fleet of ships, and so forgot their sorrow.

King Cumulus resumed his speech; and the purport of what else he had to say was, that his daughter meant to marry the first Knight who would accomplish an adventure for her sake. Two noble fellows, with black floating pennons, Nebulus and Nubis, instantly came forward. Then said Cirrha, "The first who have offered shall be first to go. Look down upon earth at yonder youth, who sits in a desert, with his head between his hands. He has been gazing up at us for the last hour. They call him Nicotine, and he is hopelessly in love with Princess Bascarilla. From my height in the sky I have often seen him sit all day long, moping in the desert. Now, go—both go—and I belong to him who first makes that youth husband to his idol."

Disconsolate Nicotine had fled the world, and lived upon sand, in a small hermitage no bigger



than a kennel. To gaze at the clouds while longing for his Bascarilla, was the only occupation left to him in life. He was sitting on the sand outside his kennel, worshipping the gorgeous colours in the clouds about the setting sun, sighing and dreaming. When he saw the wilful little winds rush out to sea, it occurred to him that they were prophesying change of weather, and "Alas!" he said, "no wind blows change into the settled gloom of my unhappy life. Upon my head no blessed rain descends!" But as he spoke, he was laid prostrate by a cataract. Nebulus and Nubis both came down upon him, fighting and spitting fire at one another by the way, each eager to be first upon the ground. Nicotine, sopped to the skin, lifted his head from the ground into the thickest and the wettest fog that ever choked a throat. But the fog parted into the shape of a couple of swarthy-looking people, who both bowed to him and begged a thousand pardons for having dropped upon him with so little ceremony.

"Is the Princess Bascarilla well?" asked Nebulus, but Nubis then spat fire and dug an elbow into his friend's rib; upon which there was instantly a great rumbling inside him. Nicotine answered nothing. He well knew himself to be the sport of all the elements. Wet and forlorn, he fled into his hovel and made fast the door against his friends. Moreover that, in spite of bolts and bars, they might not still break in, he stopped up all the holes there were in walls and roof, with gloves, coats, waistcoats, handkerchiefs, and stockings. Nebulus and Nubis waited outside in the form of settled mist, and

the youth dwelt in darkness, feeding upon dreams of love.

But by day and night the quarrelling of his two friends kept up a din about the doors. They elbowed each other, thundering and spitting lightnings, till they set fire to the thatch and burnt the poor boy's roof over his head. But at a beck from Cirrha, who was watching their behaviour from a summer sky, the two clouds like huge, black birds, spread their wings wide and flew up, fighting as they rose. Then Nicotine saw that although the hermitage was burnt, the ground about it, because of the dew in which it had so long been bathed, was changed into a delicious garden.

Far over his head, Cirrha was admonishing her knights, and telling them that since they would not serve together peacefully, they must needs serve in turn. A day should be appointed for a tournament in the blue fields above. The victor in the tournament should have the first chance of her hand, by going first to the relief of the disconsolate young mortal.

What marvel there was in the land when it was known that the youth, who had been so long under a cloud, was the owner of a Paradise of fruits and flowers ! All the world raised the dust of the desert on its march to Nicotine's Oasis. Oranges there ripened with the apple, there were figs, and peaches, and pomegranates. There were cactuses, and there was even a great aloe in full blossom, there were roses, and lilies, and daffidownhillies, of which all who came might gather, Nicotine cared not. The

garden was inexhaustible. He was the Prince of Gardeners, said the whole world. But he only sat in the charred ruin of his kennel, which the growth of ivy had changed into the most picturesque of garden ornaments. He seldom spoke, but if he spoke at all he scolded. Was the Prince of Gardeners a rank that entitled him to wed the high-born Princess Bascarilla?

She also came to walk among his flowers and to taste his fruit. She dressed and behaved according to the perfect fashion of her day, and to pay a visit to Nicotine's Oasis was a duty that society imposed upon her. The youth opened his eyes when, surrounded by ten thousand small black pages, every one ringing a peal of silver bells and followed by an innumerable flock of Italian greyhounds, she also came to pick his roses and to enrich her lips with the ripe juices of his fruits. When she came into his garden, he opened his eyes wide, and until she left, not even when she stood for half an hour to look at him, his round eyes never winked. He heard her praise him as she would have praised an owl. How could he startle her by crying, "Bascarilla, be my own!"

Then came the ladies in waiting, chattering among themselves about a great battle then impending, upon the issue of which hung the fate of King Binchona's crown and kingdom. Though King Binchona was the father of the princess, these ladies chattered about his threatened overthrow as if they were but chattering about the weather. Very soon, indeed, it was about the

weather only that they chattered. For into a ring that had been forming in the sky, there rushed from opposite sides two angry rain-clouds, thundering against each other. There was a frightful battle up above, blood poured like rain, or rain like blood, and the maids of honour scampered away to their palfreys, and their litters, and their coaches. There was a procession of them ten miles long, but when the last woman had followed in its rear, the battle in the sky was raging still. At last there was a pause in strife, a stir among the masses of the clouds. Presently a mighty wind whistled by Nicotine, and the dark Cloud-giant Nebulus stood in his garden. "I have fought and am the vanquisher," he said, "Command me, man. I can be, do, or suffer anything to serve you."

"You have vanquished in the sky," said the youth, suddenly inspired, "Conquer on earth. I am desperate, I know not who you are or what you want with me. Destroy me if you must, but if you will, as you say, be anything or do anything to serve me, then be a War-horse and carry me to the battle which decides the fate of king Binchona. Barb my spear with your lightnings, clothe my right arm with your thunder.

"Right!" said the Cloud. "My mistress bids me help you to wed Bascarilla; her praises have resounded through the sky, and we all know that she is daughter to Binchona. It is well. I am a war-horse."

He was a black war-horse, with dripping sides and flashing eyes, and steaming nostrils. Swift as

the wind he carried reckless Nicotine across the desert. Scenting it from afar, he bore down on the strife that was already begun. They met the flying troops of King Binchona. The youth caught a lance that was hurled after them, and thundered down on the pursuing enemy. Electrical was the effect of his voice. Every man's hair stood upright when he raised his war-cry, "Ho, for Bascarilla!" Convulsed with terror, the whole army of the enemy fell flat, every man with his face upon the ground, while Nicotine, upon his steaming war-horse, sat in the midst of the vanquished, brandishing his spear. The army of the King having returned, picked up and bound the prisoners. The number of them was nine hundred thousand seven hundred and three. Not a man escaped. Then singing martial songs, the conquerors marched home, with their deliverer, towards the capital.

But there the populace, delirious with joy, rang all their bells until they cracked them, and played all their fiddles until there was not left one foot of whole catgut in the city. On his magnificent horse, glorified still with the terror of its thunder, Nicotine rode through the streets, hardly seeing the crowds at the windows through the upcast caps, and hearing nothing where the air, for a mile high, was choked with sound.

Into the grand square before the palace the King and his daughter, in their best array—he crusty with jewels, and she gay with flowers—came forward to greet Nicotine as the Sword of his Country. When the hero reached the centre of the square, a noble

youth, in simple herdsman's dress, with lightning glances, and an arm that seemed to wield the thunders of Olympus, her heart leapt, and she whispered to her father, "Let him be my own." The sun of fortune shone as brightly over Nicotine as the sun that was glowing in a dark-blue sky, flecked only by a single cat's-tail cloudlet; but, alas, for him! that cloudlet was Cirrha.

Cirrha was cold of heart, and not yet minded to become the wife of Nebulus. When, therefore, she saw that he was on the point of accomplishing the adventure by which she was to be won, she played him a cat's trick. While Nicotine gazed at a Princess on earth, Nebulus, equally in love, pranced under him, rearing his head to gaze up at his Princess in the sky. Suddenly, Cirrha smiled at him, and beckoned. She was irresistible, and knew it. In an instant, therefore, up the deluded Cloud went—horse no longer—in the form of a waterspout, carrying Nicotine with him, rolling up head-over-heels, in the very moment when his cup of happiness was at his lips. So he was dropped into a great bramble-bush outside the town.

"It is a great enchanter, who has helped us," said the King.

"Woe's me," said Bascarilla. "He has carried off my heart."

Nicotine lay for some time dripping in the bramble-bush, and did not see how his friend Nebulus sailed off to the north-east in dudgeon, when he found his mistress only laughing at the ease with which he had been duped. Nubis came

forward instantly to take his turn as an adventurer. "Daughter of Ball of Cotton, I am warned," said Nubis. "You will endeavour, no doubt, to cheat me also."

"O, yes," said Cirrha; "I am bound in honour to attempt it. Nebulus might well chide if I did not."

"Nebulus chide," said the jealous Cloud, looking his cloudiest. "No matter; I will win you, mistress. See that you hold by your word."

Cirrha looked at him coldly, and bade him begone. What right had he to doubt the good faith of an Empyrean Princess!

Nubis, rightly believing that the youth would feel a little sore, stole on him gently in his bramble-bush in the form of a light evening mist. Then taking the shape of a cloud figure, through which moon-light shone, he said, "Sure help I bring you, Nicotine. Remember how I fought on your behalf against the traitor Nebulus. I knew him able to achieve only disasters. Let me take you from among the brambles."

"Off! Touch me not," said Nicotine. "This bramble-bush henceforth shall be my bed. Here I will undergo a life-long penance for my trust in vapour. Friendship, earth, life, hope, everything is vapour. You are as solid as the solidest; but I will none of you."

The vapour passed into the figure of a young and handsome maiden, in a cloud of soft, white muslin robes.

"Hear reason, Nicotine," it said. "To bring

about your marriage, I shall do better to deal as a woman with the Princess, than as a man with you, for you are troublesome and foolish. I shall go now to the palace and attend upon the person of your Bascarilla as her waiting maid. I will obtain her confidence, win her to you, and cause you to be brought to town in triumph again; not with the procession of an army, but among young maidens who strew roses before you, through streets hung with lace and garlanded with orange-blossom, while there shall be new bells in all the churches to ring for your wedding. Go back to your hermitage and there await me. When the moon is again full, I shall come to you there, and bring a summons in the first love-letter from the Princess Bascarilla." Having said these words, Nubis floated as a wreath of mist over the city walls, and passed into the chamber of the Princess through the window, which in summer nights was always open.

Bascarilla slept and did not awake until morning, when she saw a new lady of the bedchamber sitting beside her pillow, dressed in many folds of the most exquisite white muslin, weeping silently. "Who are you," she asked.

"Suffer me," answered Nubis, "to attend on one who is beloved by the lord of all my fortunes."

"What lord?"

"Nicotine! Let me serve you, that I may serve him. He loves you and he lives." The tears rained down the dark cheeks of the new handmaid, and during the whole month of her residence within the palace, water poured out at her eyes.



"Who are you?" again asked the Princess.  
"Are you highborn?"

"Very. Of as high descent as any upon earth. And yet I serve you. If you will call me sister Nubis, I will call you sister Nubilis, which means, I think, ready for marriage."

Nicotine crawled back to his garden and sat there in the old den, looking out for a full moon. Nubis won sisterly confidence from Nubilis, who sought in vain to dry her eyes.

"I think it odd," said Nubilis one day to Nubis, "that you always wear clean muslin dresses and yet brought no wardrobe with you, spend all your days with me and send no clothes whatever to the wash. Do you get up your fine linen by moonlight? Confess, dear; you are a Fairy, are you not? Enemy, of course, to the wicked enchanter who carried Nicotine off in a waterspout."

"His enemy for ever!" said Nubis fiercely, and with the flash of her eyes then burnt a hole in the Princess's bodice. Bascarilla screamed, for the fire touched her side. The King came to the rescue, but the Princess taking her friend's hand, said, "I always felt it, now I feel more acutely than ever, that this is no common person, royal father. She can defeat his enemy and bring again to us the hero by whom our enemies have been defeated for us. I demand of her my husband."

"What does the King say?" Nubis asked.

"Let me be sure that it is he. Let him enter again on his black war-horse to claim Bascarilla, and I will have the bells restored in all the steeples to

ring wedding peals for him. With my daughter's hand he shall have for his slaves all the prisoners he lately took, to the number of nine hundred thousand seven hundred and three, and the reversion of my kingdoms."

"It shall be so," said Nubis. "On the eve of the full moon, let me receive a letter from the Princess Bascarilla calling Nicotine, Sword of the Kingdom, to her side, and on the night of the full moon he shall receive it. For the day following get ready your bells, prepare your festival. On his black war-horse Nicotine again shall thunder in your streets."

["I'll be a horse indeed," thought the cloud to himself. "As for that fellow Nebulus, he was an ass!"]

On the eve of the full moon, Bascarilla Nubilis indited a delightful letter, calling Nicotine to shelter her for ever in his arms, and gave it to her friend. Then it was seen that Nubis was truly a fairy of great power, for she put the letter in her bosom, spread her muslin skirts, and floating out of window passed as a light mist over the city walls. Malicious Cirrha beckoned pleasantly to Nebulus, who sulked in the north-eastern corner of the sky, and the poor, heavy, credulous, brave cloud was at her side again, this time to be received with smiles and tempted to endearment.

Nubis, floating towards the desert, saw the false-hearted Cirrha dancing by his rival's side, and instantly becoming black as night, exploded in fierce wrath as he rushed up to separate the lovers, but he found his mistress only laughing at the ease with

which he had been duped. And to this day she is cold as an icicle, a maiden Princess among summer clouds. She sent one of her foot pages, a mischievous little breeze, to blow before him a film of burnt paper,—all that was left of Bascarilla's note after the flash of its bearer's wrath,—and flutter it to the feet of Nicotine, while he sat in his ivy tod under the light of the round moon, waiting for fortune.

In the great city, a feast was made, but only the cooks ate it. Nicotine sat during all his days and nights expectant in the desert, more especially expectant at the seasons of full moon, but his desire never was satisfied. He lived in this manner for fifty years, pondering over his ill-luck. At the end of that time he engraved upon a wall the result of all his meditations :—**I am in a Fog.**



## TOIL AND TRIUMPH.

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EVERY beast has his worshippers. In the middle of the table-land upon the top of a steep mountain was a temple dedicated "To the Strongest of the Strong." A loose rock lay before the temple-gate, and in the temple was to be set up the image of whatever creature should have strength to get it down into the valley.

A thousand animals had come in turn and harnessed themselves to the giant stone, but had not moved it. Then the Lion came, and pulling mightily, dragged it with straining nerves across the level ground. He pulled until the weight was balanced by a hair's breadth on the edge of the descent. But then he paused, "Unharness me," he said, "If I descend another step the great rock will roll over me and crush me. I abandon the adventure." So said the Lion, who pulled well but did not comprehend the art of pushing.

When the Cock saw this, he flapped his wings, uplifted his eyes, and crowed, "Fiddlededee! What a noodle are you!" Getting behind the mass of rock, he flew at it, and the mere stroke of his wing was enough to set it rolling down the mountain side.

The Lion shook his mane and stalked proudly to his lair. The image of the Cock was set up in the temple to the Strongest of the Strong.

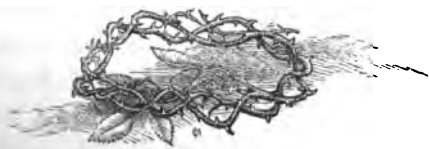


## THROUGH THE ROSES.

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NEAR Bethlehem, says an old traveller, there is a field called Floridus, in which the first roses appeared. A fair maiden, falsely blamed, was there to suffer in the flames, and she looked up to Heaven when the fire was burning round about her. Then the faggots that were burning became red rose-bushes, and those that were not kindled became white rose-bushes, full of the first roses that men ever saw.

That is no by-gone marvel. Fair or wrinkled, fresh or withering, some woman or man is known to each of us, who has looked up to Heaven from a martyr-fire, and of whom people little suffering and much complaining say, "This neighbour of ours may well smile, whose way of life is through the roses."





## A BOYS' ADVENTURES.

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I HAD been reading *Albert Pugby, or a Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Africa*. The *Steppes, or Peterkin in Asia*. *John Jones, or a Boy's Adventures in the Forests of America*. The *Australian Crusoe, or Little Billy in the Bush*. *Tom Frost, or a Baby's Residence upon the Top of Dhawalagiri, &c., &c., &c., &c., &c.* Bold boys and girls, goody boys and girls, solicitous mammas and priggish explanatory papas,

whose heads I yearned to knock against the corner of the mantel-piece, sat like one mass of nightmare on my stomach, and disturbed my nap after a New Year's dinner. Of the Seven Champions of Christendom, it is great wonder to me that the story has not been re-cast after the fashion of the time, which should present them as Master George, and Master Patrick, and five other little Masters, with a Master Arthur to play round games at his table, who should have a mamma to refer to upon all occasions, and a papa to tell him that "It has been supposed by some that Saint Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, might have visited Britain, and I am sure it will be interesting to you, my dear Arthur, if I state the grounds upon which a supposition of this nature may be regarded as extremely probable." Arthur duly responding, "O, yes, do, papa!" Enough. My dinner was spoilt in my stomach, and I read indignantly a Nightmare Tale for Boys, under the handkerchief which hides my face when I have dined. A streak of pantomime seems to have coloured it, for I had been taking our young people to sundry Christmas entertainments. Out of a square book, then, with a scarlet cover, upon which were golden pictures of strange monsters, I seemed in my dream to be reading something like what follows :—

Franklin Bruce was a bad boy. Everybody liked him, but his Aunt Grumbletub said he was a bad boy, and as he lived with her, and as she was his only known relation, she was likely to be well informed about him. Out of her house he was so good-tempered and brave that everybody loved him.

Aunt Grumbletub had a turned-up nose—a very much turned-up nose—so much so, indeed, that it presented a front view of the nostrils. It was an aggravating nose, too, for the old lady's spectacles refused to rest on any part of it except the extreme point. Mrs. Grumbletub invariably placed them on the right part of her nose, and they as invariably slid down the curved slope until they were brought up by the little hillock at the end. There they condescended to repose in peace.

"Have you learnt your Latin verb, Franklin, and done your sum?" asked this lady of the rosy boy, whose fair hair and bronzed complexion bespoke his familiarity with out-door sports.

"The rule of three does puzzle me," replied the boy with a smile, and in a tone that betrayed the presence of some foreign body in his mouth.

"Take that nasty thing out of your mouth, whatever it is," cried Mrs. Grumbletub, her dark eyes flashing fire.

"Nay, aunt," replied the boy, "I did but suck my alley."

"Obey me, torment!" cried the aunt.

"You are my Mentor," replied the boy, "and I obey."

"Alley to Jericho!" exclaimed the infuriated woman, casting the devoted marble through the open window. "O that I could but send you after it."

"I go," said the boy, and spitting on his slate, he wiped from it with his sleeve the unfinished rule-of-three sum, and without stopping to put on his



cap, went out at his aunt's door with the design of travelling to Jericho.

As he walked rapidly down the village, Franklin observed a man with shaggy hair, two wooden legs, one eye, one arm, and an anchor tattooed on his cheek, who was waltzing with a monkey on the green before the village inn. Curiosity induced him to pause and observe this singular pair, and with the thoughtless generosity of youth he expressed his pleasure at the entertainment thus afforded him by putting into the man's hat, when the monkey brought it round among the bystanders, a new sixpence, which was all the money he had in the world.

"Good-morrow, noble sir," said the sailor, for such apparently he was, when he had overtaken the boy in a green lane at a distance of some miles from the village of Dash, in which his aunt resided. "We seem to be travelling, your honour, in the same direction, and we shall have the moon presently to light us. You sail late out of port, my hearty. Whither bound?"

"Across the seas," answered the boy. "My aunt sends me to Jericho, and I intend to journey thither. You seem to be a sailor. Do you know anything about the place?"

"Know it, my hearty? Do I know a marlin-spike? Many's the yarn I've heard in the bay of Jericho. Why, man, I bought this monkey from the natives there, and a fine bout of fisticuffs I had with a shark that was chasing it, when, by ill luck, one day, it fell over the maintop gunwale cross-tree booms into the sea."

"Indeed, sir!" said Franklin. "Would you mind telling me that story?"

"Better than tell it, I will. See here, my man; this white road 's the water, there 's poor Jocko in the water, you 're the shark after him, this bank 's the deck of the *Saucy Sally*, and them trees is Jericho Castle, close alongside of which we 're moored. Now I 'm up the bank, you see; on deck, you know. Sharks to starboard! Look out to larboard! Down with the lee scuppers! One, two, three! Down I come on you, Master Shark, and down you are—"

"O, but you hurt me, sir!"

"It 's over in a minute. Down goes the shark, you see; and I not only turn him over, but I take him by the neck, and before I leave him, your honour—just permit me—I strip off his very skin."

When the sailor had begun to pull off Franklin's jacket, the boy saw his intention.

"Good," he cried. "And did you skin the very toes of the shark?"

"Ha! that did I," said the man; and, kneeling down before the boy, he proceeded to unlace his new Balmoral boots, but was delayed, as Franklin knew that he would be, by the hard knot into which one of the laces had been tied. In the meantime young Bruce, without discovering fear or suspicion, made a grotesque resistance, and rolled on the ground as if he were the shark still fighting for his prey. The boots were off.

"Now for the waistcoat," said the sailor.

"No," answered Franklin Bruce; "with your leave, now I shall put on my clothes again;" and snatching up his boots and his jacket, he retired some steps from the still kneeling plunderer, who jumped up to pursue, and at once fell flat upon his face; for Franklin had, during the mock struggle, contrived with his pocket-knife to cut two inches from one of the man's wooden legs, and seven inches from the other, as they lay on the ground behind him, when he knelt to work at the bootlaces.

"You have sixpence of mine," said the boy, "I give it you in payment for your hat;" so, putting the thief's nautical hat on his own head, and tying it by a string to his button-hole, Franklin resumed his journey.

The moon was just peeping over the trees as the boy marched onward, having left the villain and his monkey far behind, when suddenly he heard a rushing noise, and a wild cry; and in the next instant an open postchaise, dashing in round a corner, crossed the road, and was plunged by an infuriated horse towards the brink of an adjacent horrible abyss. The chaise contained a gentleman and lady, with their governess, their maid, and their six children. Franklin Bruce saw only the face of a lovely girl, who had blossomed through ten summers, as she stood up, crying wildly, "Wo, wo!" to the horses. Never before had he seen such woe as was depicted in her face; never before had a vision of such beauty crossed his path. At a glance he saw that the horses were those of the Bugle, in the neighbouring post-town, and that one of them was the vicious Bruiser,

whom the ostler had so often suffered him to ride. The love of that horse for the merry boy had been the wonder of the inn-yard; and now, even in his hurry, at the sound of a cheery "Woa-ho" from Franklin, the horse turned as to a dear friend whom it would be rude to pass in the public road without a recognition. The first pause was enough; Franklin at once walked round the animal, soothing and patting him. The peril was averted; the horse's head was turned by its driver from the abyss, over the brink of which it almost hung. And when the chaise had been turned quietly back to the high-road, the gentleman said, "Receive, my boy, the blessing of a grateful father, and accept some token, however inadequate, of my approval of your conduct. Oblige me by resuming your seat, my dear child, Louisa Jane." The blue-eyed fairy who had first caught Franklin's attention, and who now leaned forward to speak with him, sat down in decorous silence at the wish of her papa; but when Franklin had received the fourpenny piece, with which he was rewarded, after a vain search for sixpence among the elders in the chaise—for the father of the house unfortunately had by him no coin smaller than a shilling—Louisa Jane darted a kind and meaning glance at her preserver, as she dropped her little thimble over the chaise door.

The chaise rolled away, and with a new sentiment at his heart, Franklin resumed his journey. He slept that night under a haystack, and in the morning breakfasted upon a portion of the fourpence. Soon afterwards he went on board the *Arrow*, which

was a fine large ship, and set sail for the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

He had been picked up by the first mate, who, being in want of a shipboy, told him that Jericho was an island in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, and that he should be quite sure to go there if he sailed with him. An English family was on board, but he saw none of the members of it for some days, as they remained behind the partition that had been made in the main cabin for their private accommodation. He was told that the passengers were a Mr. Robinson and his family, from Paternoster Row, who were going out to establish for themselves an Owyhee Family Robinson. Being much ridiculed about the misfit of the sailor's hat which he had taken from the ruffian in the lane, and as it constantly was blown by the wind as far away from his head as the string would suffer it to go, so that he never actually wore it, Master Bruce resolved to gather it in with a piece of twine. Pulling aside the lining for that purpose, he found a pad of soft paper, such as often is placed under their linings by persons who have purchased hats that are too large for them. This he threw aside; but having ended his task, and tried on the amended hat, he found that the pad, with a little re-arrangement of its shape, would still improve the fit; and, therefore, taking it up again, he began to unfold it. Then he found, to his surprise, that it consisted wholly of bank-notes, every note being for the same sum of one thousand pounds, and there were just a hundred of them. This was a discovery which gave him some uneasiness; for, being at sea,

it was not in his power to give information to the police of the considerable amount of stolen property which he had thus recovered, neither did he feel that it was safe to confide in the rude seamen who surrounded him. Determining, therefore, to tell his story to the British Consul in the first port touched at by his vessel, Franklin replaced the notes in their original position, taking good care to see to the knots of the string that tied his valuable hat to his jacket. He had observed that the notes were all indorsed "I. Pilkins, Oct. 1, 18—;" that, he was sure, was clue enough to the discovery of their right owner.

This troublesome business being so far settled, it was with a rapture which I leave my reader to imagine, that the young sailor, turning from his work, saw at the bulk-heads a sylph-like form, the form of the fair-haired Louisa Jane, who was holding her doll's eyes over the water, in order that she might see the porpoises. The two children recognised each other, and were friends directly. While they were still in full chat, Louisa's shoulder was tapped by her father, Mr. Robinson, who had come up with the rest of the family, and whose approach the two young people had been too busy with each other to observe.

"I approve of this, my dear Louisa," said Mr. Robinson; "never, my dear child, be ashamed of a kind word spoken even to the vulgarest of little boys; we are all equal; this dirty person is your equal, my child. Your good mamma has learnt that there is no piano carried in our vessel; you must for a time, therefore, suspend your practising; but

Miss Inkpen will be happy to speak French with you till dinner-time. Go to her, my dear."

"Dear papa," said Louisa, "this is the little boy who stopped that horse for us."

"Indeed so! I recognise him now. Acquaint me with your name and business, boy?"

"Franklin Bruce; going to Jericho."

"Jericho, poor youth! Can it be that you are ignorant of the geography of the Plain of the Jordan. My son Walter, who is eight years old, and you are—"

"Twelve, sir,"

"Twelve, sir,—can possibly inform you. Walter, do you remember, and can you describe to this boy, the position of Jericho in the plain of the Jordan?"

"I remember it well, papa," replied Walter. "For the last thirty miles of the river's course, including the tract in the vicinity of the ancient Jericho, the plain has a more than usually barren and desolate aspect. Near Jericho (now represented by some ruins not far from the small village of Riha) the formation of the ground becomes less regular; the western mountains, in one or two places, jut out considerably into the Ghor; the cliffs less exactly mark the bounds of the lower plain; and the descent from the higher ground towards the bathing-place of the pilgrims (nearly abreast of Jericho) is marked by a number of rounded sand-hills. A large patch of green stunted trees and shrubs marks the site of what is supposed to be the ancient Jericho; and here and there are to be seen the remains of some considerable buildings, with fragments of an aqueduct at

the foot of the hills, to the north-west of the modern village."

"Very good," said Mr. Robinson; "as the reward of merit, you may go down and ask Miss Inkpen for a sum in fractions."

Mr. Robinson was an elderly man, with white hair gathered into a top-knot over his forehead, and a white projecting beard; he wore large spectacles, stooped much, and walked with a stick. The cut of his clothes was peculiar: they were of bright colours, and he had a little cloak with a hood to it, which especially attracted Franklin's notice. As Walter went down with Louisa to Miss Inkpen, the baby, who was in the maid's arms, noticing a bright moon in the sky, began to crow and cry, "*La lune! la lune!*" for it had been taught a few words of the French language.

"What notice the child takes!" said Mrs. Robinson.

"It does, indeed," said papa, removing it from the nurse's arms, and placing it upon his lap. "You admire, baby," he said, "the brightness of the moon; but it is time that you should be made aware, my poppet, that the moon is intrinsically a dark body, without inherent light of its own. It depends upon sunshine for the light it gives; and the varying appearances, or phases, of the moon depend upon different proportions of the illuminated disc of the opaque ball being presented to sight from the earth at different times."

Never can I tell in detail to a confiding public all that I read in the nightmare book. A frightful



storm arose, and Mr. Robinson discoursed on the phenomena of storms in the midst of a shipwreck. Franklin's hat was blown from its moorings at his button-hole, in a tremendous hurricane, and lost at sea. All hands were lost except the entire family of Mr. Robinson, with Franklin Bruce, and an old sailor, who were thrown on a wild, tropical island, inhabited by a strange race of savages, called the Ka Lowns.

This people painted its face white, tattooed over with large, angular spots of red, and streaked itself with red about the mouth. It wore loose parti-coloured linen garments, and was constantly at war with the tribe of the Ar Leekins in the mountains higher up, chiefly upon the subject of intermarriage with the Coo Lumbins, a race of half-naked women, also dwelling in that same island of Roottetootte. There were brilliant bowers, birds of gay plumage, sea and land monsters of hideous form inhabiting the island, upon the shore of which our adventurers planted themselves with only an old box to live in. They had scarcely fixed their camp when one of the natives rushed towards them, mouthing, and uttering the cry, "Erawearagain howchadoo," with which they always make their entrance into battle. Mr. Robinson taught much to the children, and the handiness of the young Franklin, who had been engaged as a page by Mrs. Robinson, won for him the good will of the household, or rather boxhold, and the admiration of Louisa.

But a cloud was upon that youth's soul, which all the wonderful productions of the island, daily

explained to him so carefully, and all the wild adventures in the bushes could not melt away. A chance mention by dear Mr. Robinson of the name of I. Pilkins, in connection with an allusion to his own former prosperity, and to the reverse which, by enforcing on him a prudent economy, had disqualified him from presenting, on a certain memorable occasion, more than fourpence to his deliverer, led to the disclosure that I. Pilkins had been agent for the sale of great estates in Boothia Felix, owned by Mr. Robinson, and that the money yielded by them, many hundreds of thousands of pounds in bank-notes, forwarded October the first, eighteen hundred and —, had been robbed from the messenger, whose mangled body was found in a well. And Franklin having found and lost this treasure, dared not mention it to the discovered owner. He felt that he was a deceiver—that he carried about a secret which he ought to have disclosed at once. But he dared not risk the anger of the father of Louisa.

One day as he walked sadly in the woods skirting the sea-shore, a bird's nest, singular in form, attracted his attention. He climbed the stem and saw, to his delight, the sailor's hat which had been blown to land by the same hurricane that drove them also upon the island, which had been caught in the trees, and in which a pair of parrots had since made their nest. The hen parrot was sitting on the eggs. The boy at once leapt to the earth again and flew, not to Mr. Robinson, but to his young play-mate, Louisa, whom he made the sharer of his

happiness. He told her the whole story, which she told again to her papa. Mr. Robinson was pleased by the intelligence, especially pleased that the birds had not been molested in their nest. He walked to the spot next day with his young friends, and pointed out to them the impropriety of meddling with the hat, until the parrot's eggs were hatched and the young parrots fledged. In the course of a few months these processes of nature were complete, the hat was then taken down and found to contain notes for one hundred thousand pounds.

"Delightful are this parrot's notes," said Mr. Robinson, moved for the first time and last time in his life to make an approach to a small pleasantry. Then patting Franklin on the head, he said, "Good boy, it is my duty surely to reward you hundred-fold. You gave for this hat sixpence, and although usurious interest is commonly to be regarded as unholy, I believe that I am justified in returning to you your money with interest, at the rate of one hundred per cent. Accept this shilling."

Louisa was now heir to immense wealth, and Franklin was but a poor page; but the two children got lost in the wood one day, and were seized by the Ar Leekins, a race of people tattooed in bright colours and at war with the Ka Lowns. These wild creatures carried the little boy and girl into a cave of diamonds, which was the palace and the property of their chief, who seeing that Franklin had a corn on each of his little toes, knew him to be his son. This was indeed Franklin's long-lost papa, who had been cast on the same island many years before, was

given up for dead in England, but in Roottetoote had accepted the tattoo of the Ar Leekins, and had by his agility become their chief. He would not leave his new home, where he was married to a lovely wife from among the Coo Lumbins, but he gave to his son one hundred thousand sacks of diamonds, which there is reason to suppose made him, in due time, an eligible husband for Louisa Jane, the eldest daughter of Blank Robinson, Esquire.



## NECK AND NECK.

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A HORSE meeting a camel reared and snorted. "I cannot see how I offend you," said the camel. But the horse, without answering, ran to his friends.

"That fellow, the camel," he said, "cannot see how he offends me! Odious beast, that with a hump like that upon his back, carries his head so high!"

"The giraffe is worse," said a quick-eared old racer, called Maestro. "Disgraced all over with black spots, he yet carries his head higher than any creature living."

"Then," said a foal, "there is the pig, who eats dirt, and says that his grunt will scare an elephant."

"That," said the racer, "is false. But I certainly have carried a two-legged pig who thought as highly of himself. There are men also with frightful humps who hide them behind high necks like the camel; and the men who have the tallest necks are the most covered with spots."

"But, after all," neighed a good-tempered cart-horse, "the camel is as he was made."

"So is the spotted beast," neighed an old mare. "So is the hog," neighed another. "So is man," neighed the foal.

"In that pleasant chorus," said Maestro, "there was one false note, I think. Neigh it again, and let the foal keep silence."



## SIR AYLEVAN.

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### CHAPTER I.

MADAM PIDGE LOOKS IN UPON THE FAIRY SAINTFOIN.

Two sticks crossed were the arms of Sir Aylevan. His wrath was quick. When he rode in the forest he would dismount to hack and punish any tree that seemed to fork its branches in contempt of him. But he was just in his anger. He would spend a whole day in a marsh, searching for the particular frog that

had croaked at him when he was passing early in the morning. His hair and beard were red, his eyes were green, his face was yellow, and he had a long hooked nose, blue at the tip, yet he was beautiful as a rainbow in the eyes of Saintfoin, the meadow Fairy, who had been doomed, for an offence against the Fairy Queen, to love him heartily for a whole twelvemonth. Music to her ear was the clanking of his sword against his rusty iron armour. He was poor because he was quarrelsome, although the world contained many a smooth and thriving man whose heart, shown fairly against Sir Aylevan's, was but as fat of hogs to frankincense.

Golden sunlight streamed among the pine-trees, and fell broken into a thousand fragments on the fern and foxglove, among which Sir Aylevan was resting in his armour, while his horse followed the sound of running water to a fountain near at hand. Worried by gnats, the Knight leapt to his feet, and fighting savagely with his tormentors, chased them through the trees until he lost the brake in which he had been resting. The way back to it could not be found, and the mischance was serious, for in that brake his faithful horse awaited him. Up started a hare, and ran against his leg. It was poor little Fairy Saintfoin. Sir Aylevan fiercely pursued the hare, and lost her at the tree beside which his own horse was standing. Then the Knight, forgetful of his rage, patted the steed fondly, for he loved him as a friend, and mounted to pursue his journey.

But the shades of evening had fallen, and the night breeze touched the forest. Lofty trees creaked

in the wind, and rubbed their stems together, making weird sounds in the lonely wilderness. The breeze was cold. A speck of light shone down the bridle path before the traveller, and as he stumbled forward, leading his horse by the bridle, he came to a little girl carrying a pine torch that burnt with a green flame.

"Do you belong, child, to a cottage in which I may rest?"

"Our house is but a cave, Sir Aylevan," the child replied.

"What, little one! you know my name?"

"Sir, all the forest knows how you have burnt your home behind you, and are come out to redress the wrongs of which the world is full."

The Knight, with a grim look, shouldered his lance, and its pennon was heard flapping in the night wind.

"Am I your jest?" he said.

"By the moon, no!" said the child. "I worship you, and come to beseech that you will rest to-night in our unworthy cave."

The child—it was little Saintfoin again—led the way. But the night moths were attracted by her torch; and from a tremendous Hawk-Moth Sir Aylevan received a blow upon the face that was not to be passively endured. Convinced that he should recognise that Moth, the warrior leapt suddenly upon his horse, and plunged among the trees; but very soon the roots of trees lurking in darkness, brought the good horse down upon his knees, and threw Sir Aylevan against a pine-stem.



Little Saintfoin went to her cave in the forest, where two giants, husband and wife, waited upon her, and sent them to fetch Sir Aylevan. Hoya, the she-giant, had been cured by Saintfoin of a grievous malady. In gratitude, she and her he-giant Hayo had now come to attend on the good Fairy during her year's exile, and protect her against evil-doers. Hoya brought Sir Aylevan to the cave, stunned as he was, in a fold of her apron. Hayo followed with the Knight's horse in his pocket. Knight and horse were then tenderly laid in clover, and the horse was satisfied.

When Sir Aylevan recovered a part of his senses, he found himself reclining upon moss, clover, and lavender-blossom, in a large chamber, of which the walls were thickly overgrown with living leaves and flowers, dotted with birds'-nests, out of which a sleepy chirp came now and then. The roof was mossy rock, brightened with needle points of crystal, and through a rift in the far corner of it, fringed with fern and foxglove, shone a bright planet from the outer sky. On a huge bed of clover, near that entrance to the cave, the he-giant lay sleeping. His wife nodded over a sapphire table, upon which the Fairy's pine torch, standing upright, as it seemed, by its own power, burnt with a green, smokeless flame. Heaps of flowers were about the room, and upon these fawns, leverets, and brilliant butterflies were resting. The whole chamber was smoothly carpeted with growing heather. There was a hushing sound of music in the air, subtle as odour from the flowers, and as free from all the

grating on the sense that comes with music jarred out of a mortal instrument. Sir Aylevan listened with his eye fixed on the star, before which a fern-top waved in the night breeze. Suddenly something else flitted before the star, and a great moth entering the cave, hummed its way to the torch-light. Sir Aylevan's rage instantly returned upon him. Was he still defied? Immediately rushing out upon the enemy, he slew him in his dance about the torch, bringing down his iron hand upon the moth, and ending its life with a crash upon the sapphire table.

The giantess ceased nodding, and jumped to her feet. Sir Aylevan, gazing down on the dead moth, was tearing his beard in dismay. "Alas! alas!" he cried, "unjust that I am! I was insulted by a Hawk, and I have slain a Spinner." Hoya took the mailed Knight up in her arms, and walked about the room with him, dancing him, and hushing him, as if she were his nurse, and he a baby. Then, when he ceased shrieking; in despair, careless of all she did, and only thinking of the innocent life he had taken; she laid him down upon his bed, and gave him his spear to play with, pointing the thick end in an inviting manner near his mouth, under the firm belief that he might like to suck it. Those giants and giantesses have not many ideas. Hoya had had babies of her own, bigger and fiercer than Sir Aylevan, and as she had been a careful mother to them, so she would be, she was resolved, to the poor little foundling, for which her tender-hearted Saintfoin had shown pity. Saintfoin had, with

tender care and magic art, helped her, poor clumsy mother of giants as she was. And now it pleased the same kind spirit to take pity on an outcast baby of her race. Men did not frequent the wood in which Sir Aylevan was found; it was the home of a wild tribe of giants, to which Saintfoin had been banished. The Knight's steed was, in Hoya's eyes, the toy horse which had been brought for him by his father from the distant cultivated plains.

"Has one of my coach-horses been this way?" asked a voice from the rift that served as entrance to the cavern. The moon now shone over the edge of it, and against the moon there stood out, black as a chafer, the form of a tiny woman in a peaked cap, with a broad, flat nose, thick lips, and eyes like red embers.

"No, Madam," said Hoya; "no coach-horses."

"One of my horses flew this way when we were unharnessing, and I shan't sleep till it is found. Ho, ho!" said the tiny woman, "what have you there upon your table?" The ill-looking little visitor spread out a pair of beetle-wings, and blundered down towards the moth. "Where's your mistress?" she said, viciously. "Tell her Madam Pidge is here."

"My mistress is out, and is not to be in till morning, Madame Pidge," said Hoya.

"Pretty doings," Pidge sneered. "But I'll kill her if she kills my horses. That's my horse, and the chit Saintfoin shall answer for it. I know where she is; and, if I don't kill her, Oberon shall be told how she hides and peeps down at his people in the

mushroom-ring. A mean, little set they are; but they had sense enough to turn her out, and now, you great woman, she shall learn what it is to have me for a neighbour. I've taken a little place close by, because I mean to have my eye upon her, and there now—you see what she is! I have only just arrived, they unharness my travelling carriage, and already she has killed one of my horses!"

Madam Pidge threw herself about the cave, and then tumbled out through the fern at the entrance in a mighty passion. Hoya was vexed and alarmed. She roused her sleeping husband with the shout that Saintfoin was in danger. "Go, watch or warn her," she said. "You'll find her, if the moon shine, in the empty robin's nest that overlooks the Fairy ring. In the moon-light, you know, she is no bigger than this baby's thumb, so keep your eyes about you. Don't approach the nest, but watch it. If you go near while the Fairies that she slips away to watch are frolicking about, they will be playing you some idle tricks. When Saintfoin comes in your way, warn her that Madam Pidge has taken a place near her, and is deadly spiteful, because this beast of a baby has killed one of her coach-horses." Hoya, while Hayo climbed out of the cavern, took up out of his bed the still whimpering Sir Aylevan, stood him upright upon her lap, shook him, and showed him the dead moth upon the table. "Do you see there, what mischief you have done, you vicious child?"

"Wretch that I am," cried Sir Aylevan. "It is a Spinner."

"What do you say?"

"It is the wrong sort of moth!"

"Surely enough it is the wrong sort of moth. Its death may be the death of dear little Saintfoin. Why did she ever take you in! But come, since you are here and in my charge, you must be washed and dressed. What nurse, I wonder, put a baby into clothes like these!" said Hoya. And she began to peel Sir Aylevan out of his armour as one peels a shrimp. The Knight shrieked with rage, and Hoya, who had peeled one of his legs, was throwing her baby into fits by a series of motherly attempts to pacify him, when there was a sound of gay laughter at the entrance to the cavern, and little Saintfoin was seen in the moonlight, spreading her light wings to descend. When she reached the floor of the cave and was fairly out of the moonlight, she grew to the stature of a little child again.

"Hoya, dear," she said, "what a comical great blunderer you are. Don't make pap for Sir Aylevan. He is a brave man, and as you are a sort of woman and I am a sort of woman, shall I tell you a woman's secret in your ear?" Saintfoin ran up Hoya's knees, and sitting upon her shoulder, whispered: "Oberon has given him to me to be loved." From the shoulder of the giantess Saintfoin looked down at Sir Aylevan, who then lay quite still, looking up at her out of the grinning giantess's lap.

## CHAPTER II.

SIR AYLEVAN LOOKS IN UPON MADAM PIDGE.

IN the meantime good-natured Hayo stalked into the wood, and knowing the lack of brains by which a giant suffers when he has the sport of the good Fairies, or the malice of the wicked Fairies to contend with, he resolved to bring to the aid of Saintfoin not his own head only, but the united wits of a large number of his friends. There might be brains enough in fifty giants for the errand on which he was sent; therefore he kicked up fifty of his friends whose lairs in the wood he perfectly well knew, and the faintest perception of some help that they might bring to Saintfoin, was enough to join them heartily together. The poor little outcast Fairy, housed among these giants, had done them all so many tender services with her bright Fairy wit and brighter Fairy nature, that the whole tribe of big people cherished her and worshipped her. Her heart did indeed yearn for the fellowship of her old comrades within the Fairy ring, but if in her exile there was consolation to be had in giants, these were the giants to console her.

Hayo, as leader of a herd of fifty, then proceeded through the forest to the Fairy ring. Giants can trample brushwood, overthrow trees, and cause the earth to shake with the weight of their rush, but they resemble their third cousins, the elephants, in

being also able to move noiselessly and leave no broken twig upon their path, to lie hidden among the leaves, and be discovered only by the shining of their eyes when one is close upon their feet. When Hayo and his friends had glided near the Fairy ring, and the tall fellows who were nearest could even see the moonlit sward and Fairies like a swarm of grasshoppers leaping about on it, they drew together, and having decided on their course of action, were picketed by Hayo round the robin's nest. The peak of a little cap was seen in it, and now and then a dull red gleam of light shone over its edge. Saintfoin, no doubt, was there. The fifty giants therefore fixed their hundred eyes upon the robin's nest, and were an Argus watchful of their favourite. They waited patiently until the moon sank in the heavens, and the white dew began to rise among the tree-stems as a streak of dawn appeared. Then all the Fairies vanished, and the peaked cap rose high enough in the robin's nest, to show a pair of dull red eyes and a broad flat nose and thick lips. Every giant saw at the same instant that it was not Saintfoin. Of course it was Pidge. Hayo dimly supposed that it was Madam Pidge, who was a new resident in the forest, about whom the other giants knew nothing at all.

Without loss of time Pidge mounted a large cockchafer and rode away, but on the road her steed, puzzled among the darkness of the tree-tops, became entangled in the long dark hair of Hayo, who was upon duty as one of the pickets. Madam Pidge looked down to see the cause of stoppage, and observing that the legs of her steed were entangled

in the hair of some clumsy, early-rising giant, she dug spitefully the point of her wand into Hayo's head, muttered a charm, and immediately all the hair dropped from it. Then Madam rode on, leaving behind her a bald-headed giant. The fifty friends would all have pursued Madam Pidge, if some of them had not been thrown into bewilderment by sight of the smooth expanse left in place of Hayo's bushy hair. A dozen of the pickets did, however, follow noiselessly upon the track of the malicious fairy, and they ran her down to a hole in the rock under which Saintfoin lived. The hole was directly over the rift that led down into little Saintfoin's cavern.

The dozen giants then laid themselves down among the bushes and crunched pine-cones, for they had grown hungry. Their companions arrived somewhat later, in high wrath, and departed again to consult with other giants of the forest. Hayo, rubbing the bare crown of his head, re-entered Saintfoin's cavern.

During all this time, Saintfoin, who had rescued her knight from the attentions of his nurse, had not been sitting like a little mouse in her hole, perfectly still. Hoya fairly perceiving that Sir Aylevan could run alone, set him, brimful of wrath and remorse, upon his feet again. Saintfoin with childish tenderness touched one of his hands, looked up into his face, and said: "Father Aylevan, take me upon your lap." She spoke in such loving tones, that no mood could interpret into mockery.

"Child, child!" answered the knight. "I am a



wicked, miserable wretch ; guilty and well-deserving to be scorned."

"Little Saintfoin has been made to love you, Father Aylevan," the Fairy shily said. "It was not told her how she was to do it, but her heart has taught her she must love you very dearly as a little child. Father Aylevan, let Saintfoin sit upon your knee." The knight sat down stubbornly ; then Saintfoin being settled in his lap, nestled her head against his bosom, and looked up with dark blue trusting eyes into his face. The sullen man's hand strayed unconsciously among her silken ringlets.

"Let me tell you a story," said the child. "Once upon a time, there was a poor little bit of a Fairy, that was I, who fell out of favour at court, and was told she must love a knight, that was you, whom she was accused falsely of slandering."

"You slander !" cried Hoya. "You, who can love a toad ! I do not mean this toad," she added, shrugging her mighty shoulders at the knight. Sir Aylevan's eyes flashed.

"Listen to me, father," said the Fairy, "Hoya is like a thousand other folk, she has a heart larger and warmer than her tongue. I did not slander you, but some one did."

"Who, who ?"

"Somebody, father,—who, I know not,—somebody who paid, I think, a high price for the power of belying me, and who has taken upon herself punishment enough. For a week I was absent from the Fairy court, and yet, as if I had been there, accused of poisoning its pure air with my slander of

some angry knight who had become my jest. Therefore they banished me. When I returned to my own people, I was already condemned to be an exile among the good monsters in this wood. Also I was to love you. Love is easy. Exile very, very hard."

Aylevan, as she said this, put his arm about her. The good heart of frankincense was warming and already giving out its fragrance.

"But if you loved the Fairy-land, poor little one, why did you leave it? You were absent for a week!"

"Only a week!" sighed Saintfoin. "When my playfellow's red lips were dry, and when his dimpled smile was fallen in the hollowness of pain and death, he tossed three weeks upon his little bed. Housewife Bridget, who lives by my own meadows outside the forest, had in her cottage a bright golden boy. She called him Robin. He was about three years old. We used to play together in the house and out among the daisies. I would sit in the room unseen and watch for his being set down from his father's knee—of him I learnt, Father Aylevan, how children love. He was the chosen partner of my frolics. Sometimes I dared even to tickle him and smile at him when he lay in his mother's lap. Ah, Robin, dearest little dainty Robin!" Saintfoin rocked herself and was silent, for she was in tears.

"Well?" said the Knight presently, putting his other arm about her.

"Madam Pidge shook fever over the house because I loved the child, and I—I did not know it, till the little lips could answer no more to my kisses.

I went to the cottage for my pleasure, and there was Death sitting in the porch. I entered and there was an Angel bent over the little cot, watching the labour and the rattle of my Robin's breath. Who was I then? I sat still under the warm, holy shadow of the Angel's wings, and covered my face when the little soul was lifted to its rest upon the Angel's bosom. I would have comforted the mother, but how could I? Ah, what comfort can a Fairy bring to the heart-broken mother when the coffin of her darling is within her doors! I was but a playfellow, and she—Angels abided by her. As for me, I watched by the tiny coffin of my darling till they took it where I could not follow."

The Knight bent his head over little Saintfoin's weeping face and kissed her on the forehead.

"Pidge is at the bottom of everything," Hoya cried, and at this moment the bald-headed Hoya re-entered the cavern.

"Husband!" cried Hoya, "where have you left your hair?"

"It is Madam Pidge who has been shaving me. But Saintfoin is here. It is all right. I'll make myself a wig of the beards of wild barley. I mean that you, Hoya, shall make me one."

"Pidge again!" Hoya cried. "We must do something to Pidge!"

"Pidge!" shouted Sir Aylevan, tenderly putting Saintfoin down, as he leapt up. "The name flashed upon me! It is she! By all my chimneys that have smoked—by all the thorns that have lurked in my chairs—by all the gnats that have beset my bed

—by all the frogs that have been fished out of my soup—by all the doors that have scrooped—all the beds that have groaned—all the dogs that have howled beneath my window! By the fire that I set to a house no longer to be endured, Pidge is my enemy as well as yours! I have heard rats squeak her name in the night. I have heard it hooted by the owl my arrow would not pierce. I have heard cats shriek it on my roof, and ravens croak it at my door. Me Pidge has tormented! But I am an ugly selfish brute! Baldheaded giant, you love Saintfoin and hate Pidge. Give me my lance, and let us go!” Hoya was gone already, for the bald head of her husband troubled her; she was not gifted with original ideas, she was doing as she was told, gathering wild barley to plait into a wig.

The dawn had been filling the cave with soft shadowless light, and the birds in it were twittering their morning songs. A beam of morning sunshine gilded the ferns at the cavern’s mouth, and slanted down upon its carpeting of heather. The butterflies dashed into it, the leverets and fawns leapt from their beds and gathered about Saintfoin. A bear came to the cave’s mouth, and by thrusting his head in, shut out some of the morning’s light while he peered down with friendly and expectant eyes.

“Look at that stupid old Bruin,” Saintfoin laughed. “He punishes me with his friendship for having called off from his head a swarm of bees.” But Saintfoin gave her friend, the bear, a pleasant nod, and set for him upon her floor a hollow gourd full to the brim with honey. Feeling his way

carefully down the rock, Bruin came in and breakfasted.

It was not easy for Sir Aylevan in the kind little child Fairy's cave to keep his pot of passion boiling. Saintfoin was at work like a good housekeeper upon the furnishing of breakfast for her guests. To the bear and the butterfly she was alike a friend. The race of giants was devoted to her service, and the leveret slept free from care under her roof.

"Let your lance rest," said the Fairy to Sir Aylevan. A wave of her hand covered the table with a breakfast of sweet fruits, fresh milk, bread white as milk, and wine that glowed as if a summer-day had been dissolved in it. "We must all breakfast, Father."

"But your wrongs, your wrongs"—

"Ah! Father Aylevan," she answered, "evil suffered carries lighter pain than evil done. If it be true that Madam Pidge bore my shape for a week in presence of our good Titania, she paid a full price for the luxury of so much spite."

"What price?" the Knight asked.

"Her whole Fairy life beyond. Within six years, or instantly upon the touch of some herb—what it is I do not know—she must become a Bat, to live a bat's life, and to perish as a bat. Let her alone! If she has wronged me, she has paid her price. And for the harm she has done you, why care? I can rebuild your house."

"She shall vex earth no more!" shouted Sir Aylevan. "Where is she?"

"Overhead," answered Hayo. Saintfoin started

and shrank. "We have traced her to a nest above this cavern. My mates are outside, keeping an eye upon her."

"She is there for mischief to your little mistress," said the Knight. "This must not be. Give me my lance, and let us go. I will look in at once on Madam Pidge."

The wise little Fairy had a wholesome faith in courage. When Sir Aylevan, with Hayo for his squire, scrambled up out of the cave, she sat down on the heather, rested a little hand on the neck of a fawn that came towards her for a fondling touch, and thoughtfully looked down upon the heather blossoms. The morning sun that had been struggling through a cloud, broke loose and darted a bright ray across her golden tresses. She would save Sir Aylevan, if harm should threaten. As for Madam Pidge, she was, of course, safe from the thrust of mortal spear.

"Stay here," said the Knight to the giant, when they were outside the cave. "Only raise me upon your shoulder until you can thrust me head first into Pidge's hole."

Hayo, faithfully doing as he was bidden to do, shot Sir Aylevan head first into the dwelling-place of Madam Pidge. The descent within was steep, and the Knight fell heavily. When he arose, fierce with wrath, he found that he had fallen at the feet of Madam, who was sitting with a live toad half-skinned in her lap.

"Ah, here you are," she said. "I knew you would come to spend a long day in my little place, and, as you see, am just preparing dinner,"

## CHAPTER III.

## EVERYBODY GOES TO COURT.

THOUGH Madam Pidge had been a very short time in her chamber, she had made it very loathsome, and all that he saw in it made the good Knight angrier. "Go on," said Pidge, when he reviled her. "Make festival, and spare not. Foul words, you know, are meat and drink to me. But tell me, who killed my off leader?"

"If that creature was in your power," the Knight answered, "Spinner though he was, I can forgive myself for having put him out of pain. You are my prisoner." Pidge laughed in scorn, and he went on with fury. "You defile a woman's shape! But you have shape of woman, and I cannot strike! You are my prisoner! Here, in your den, I take you!"

"In my den, Knight, it is I who take you," Pidge answered, with a sneer. Then, leaping up to the entrance near the roof, through which Sir Aylevan had tumbled, "I yield to you," she said, "this room, and, that you may not refuse my gift, will lock the door behind me as I leave. Pray eat whatever you find in my larder. I shall go and quarter myself upon Saintfoin. But, wait. What do I see? Ho, ho! Sir Knight. You came up against me with a host of giants at your back. Let them look to themselves!"

There were by this time a hundred giants engaged in the siege of Pidge's nest, and Hayo was their general. By his order they were amassing heaps of all the herbs that grew in and around the forest, because he had picked out of Saintfoin's story the important fact that there was some herb, which, if it touched Madam Pidge, would put an end to all her troubling. His plan was, that, when she appeared, his big brethren should discharge against her at random every green thing that could be pulled. He hoped that some one of them would perhaps give her the finishing touch.

While Madam at the entrance to her nest paused, and looked down spitefully upon the stupid monsters lumbering among the pine trees, carrying whole stacks of leaves, and herbs, and wild flowers, she was descried by Hoya. At the moment when that faithful giantess was covering her husband's baldness with the matted beards of the wild barley, she gave the word, and, as if whirled by a hurricane, the storm beat upon Madam Pidge. Away flew Adder's Tongue, and All Heal, Sulphurweed, Sedge, Madder, Fern, Basil, and Bryony; after them were hurled Fleabane, Fool's Parsley, Borage, Nightshade, Goose Grass, Saxifrage, and Duckweed. Hog's Fennel and Hedge Mustard sang through the air, with Gorse and Mandrake, Pennyroyal, Ivy, Poppy, Thistle, Teasel, Toothwort, and Timothy Grass, Vetch, Yarrow, Whortleberry, Hogweed, Nettle, Wolf'sbane, Purple Loose-strife, and whatever other herb was to be found. The younger giants, capering with joy, brought more and more



ammunition to the field, and three times Madam Pidge was, by the hurtling storm, knocked back into her den.

"What do the louts mean?" she cried. "I would make stones of them, if stones could feel my revenge." Then she espied, in his yellow wig, Hayo directing the assault. "That is the monster in whose hair I was caught last night. He was in Saintfoin's cavern, too. Been thatching his head with wild barley, has he? Oaf! Every beard's point shall be a poisoned barb! Shout gaily till I come to you and change your music!"

Madam Pidge caused a mass of rock to roll over the entrance to her den, and shot herself like an arrow at the head of Hayo. A wild shout of exultation burst from the throats of all the giants; as a grey bat was seen beating its wings against their leader's ears. Praised in song be the wild barley! Wild Barley was the herb. Now Madam Bat might fly her highest. She could not escape the long arms of a hundred giants. Twelve of them falling on the rock, tore open a free passage for Sir Aylevan, while Saintfoin stood among the ferns upon the threshold of her cavern. Hayo must hold the bat in his hand tenderly, while Hoya wove for it a cage of twigs.

"Until midnight only," Saintfoin said, "this bat must remain a prisoner. Three blood-red hairs over the heart mark animals like this. And now my Queen may know that it was not her handmaid Saintfoin who defiled the air with slander."

The cage was soon made, and the bat safely

imprisoned. But the giants were all sitting about the place, munching again at the pine-cones, and making holiday among themselves.

It was a day of ideas for them. They had thought of something else. They would escort their little Saintfoin back to Fairy-land, and see that she was properly received by Oberon. In vain their darling laughed at them, pleaded, and scolded. Being stupid, they had full right to be obstinate. Instead of yielding, they made matters worse. Saintfoin, trembling with tender expectation, longed to slip back alone, like a forgiven child, and receive from Titania the kiss so long denied. But here there were not only all the giants in the forest stubbornly determined upon going with her. All her friends were agreed to see her home, and break into the Fairy circle if she were repulsed. When evening came the bear only paced about under the trees ; he would not sleep. The butterflies and the birds struggled, by help of incessant chirping and fluttering, to keep themselves awake. Moonrise might have been sunrise for the stir of life that it excited.

Fairy Saintfoin, nothing doubtful of the gentleness of her own race, and having nothing worse to dread than kindly laughter, quietly submitted. To have gone to Court with none except Sir Aylevan and the convicted Pidge was her desire. But the will of the forest ordered otherwise. First, there were to march Hayo, in his wig of wild barley, and Hoya carrying the bat in her cage of twigs. But the bear had his own private obstinacy, and considered himself, for reasons known to himself

only, entitled to walk first in the procession. He argued his own right so fiercely, that they left him to his will. Bruin, therefore, walked first, looking constantly back, round the sides, and between the legs of the giant and his wife, at Saintfoin, who rode before Sir Aylevan, nestled within one of his arms, and, although it was moonlight, still having the figure of a child. Behind them there came tramping among the pine-trees the procession of the giants, and above came the light, flying squadron of the butterflies and all the birds, by whom the march music was played. It was not performed by them very briskly, for, in spite of all their efforts, they were sleepy, and flew often against the trees. Among the trees, on either side, ran a swift crowd of leverets, and fawns, and gentle creatures of the wood.

Sir Aylevan's red hair and yellow face, his green eyes and blue nose, seemed handsome in the moonlight. Or, it may be, that there was something at his heart which gave a glory to his face. In the rich glow of all the love about her, Saintfoin's cheek flushed, and her heart throbbed with an eager, yearning sympathy.

The giants did not break into the Fairy ring that night. Before they marched into its glade, the Fairy revellers themselves had broken out of it. Saintfoin alone saw that the Fairy Queen stood in the path before them, until, when they were close to her, the bear lay down and licked the earth on which she stood. She held her hand to Saintfoin, who at once leapt as a tiny Fairy to her side. "I

know," she said, "what evil I have done. Let the bat fly whither she will. Our wrong has not been done to Saintfoin only. If one Fairy can gather to herself, out of the pine forest, this world of love, the pines are not so gloomy, and the giants not so dull, as we supposed. Therefore, our Fairy ring is broken. Worthy giants, we claim fellowship with you; your wilderness shall be our home. To-night our revels will be held in Saintfoin's cavern." Then Titania laid her hand upon the head of Hayo, and his barley-wig flowed into hair that was the wonder of all giants, and the pride of Hoya. And again, floating in the air, she laid her hand over the heart of Sir Aylevan, where Saintfoin's head had rested, bidding him turn his horse, and ride to his own house.

He turned, and rode home in the moonlight, nothing doubting, and he found his home. Thenceforth, he lived in peace. The frankincense of his heart was melted in a Fairy censer, and the world about him was the temple that its perfume filled. His home seemed to be lonely; he was ill-favoured, and sought no wife. But sometimes, when, after a day worthily spent, he sat, at twilight, by the embers in his great dim hall, he saw the silken locks of his child Fairy scattered upon his arm, and might look down into her deep, blue eyes, glittering up at him with smiles or tears, or shining steadily with love. To Sir Aylevan, in his joy and in his sorrow, often there came the little Saintfoin, claiming right to nestle on his lap. So there was no place like that home of his, and no child dearer to its mother than that fondling Fairy to the Knight.

## A LOVER OF JUSTICE.

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"I WONDER," said a Sparrow, "what the Eagles are about, that they don't fly away with the cats. And, now I think of it, a civil question cannot give offence." So the Sparrow finished her breakfast, went to the Eagle, and said :

"May it please your royalty, I see you and your royal race fly away with the kids and the lambs that do no harm. But there is not a creature so malignant as a cat. She prowls about our nests, eats up our young, bites off our own heads. She feeds so daintily that she must be herself good eating. She is lighter to carry than a kid, and you would get a famous grip in her loose fur. Why do you not feed upon cat?"

"Ah," said the Eagle, "there is sense in your question ! I had the worm, too, here this morning, asking me why I did not breakfast upon Sparrow. Do I see a morsel of worm's skin on your beak, my child?"

The Sparrow cleaned his bill upon his bosom and said : "I should like to see the worm who came to you with that inquiry."

"Stand forward, worm," the Eagle said.

But, when the worm appeared, the Sparrow snapped him up and ate him. Then he went on with his argument against the cats.



## THE MELON GARDEN.

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FAR underground there is a hot, close country, near the centre of the earth, inhabited by very busy Fairies called the Dits, who come up to the surface in the shape of worms. They busy themselves at the roots of plants, and pour into them an amazing vigour.

On the borders of the great empire of Teshu lived Lerilla, who was one of the richest and the poorest women in the land. She was rich in herself and in her one-and-twenty children ; poor in her husband

Lull, who worked only for self-indulgence, when he became weary of laziness. This, of course, was a form of indulgence that he seldom needed. He was good-natured, and would, upon occasion, hold a child for a few minutes, setting it down if it cried.

Lull was a portly man, with a magnificent bald head, and an imposing face. But his bald head was covered with a ragged cap. His clothes were one mass of embroidery, for there was not a square inch of their surface upon which a hole had not been neatly sewn up by Lerilla's needle. Every day, Dame Lerilla took right heartily and cheerfully her five hours sleep and nineteen hours of labour.

Her eldest children worked for the support of the whole household in a patch of garden land; the children next in age below them helped their mother in her housework, and her mending, and her care over the youngest. Happy Lerilla never lost a child, or a child's love. Perhaps, in all her life, she never lost an hour, unless it were an hour spent on her husband. Good-humour kept her hale and comely. Her thoughts were as a healing and refreshing daily remedy against fatigue and pain. Had there been anything unwholesome in them she would not have thriven as she did on endless toil.

Health was in the house; the father, though idle, was placid, and there was open love at all hours of the day between the mother and her children. They lived wholly upon the produce of a little garden, which was lately become famous for the

large return it yielded to their labour. Indeed, had it been upon the outskirts of the capital, instead of being on the remote borders of the kingdom, great would have been the profits of this garden; yet it was but a reclaimed patch of waste land which, until a year ago, had barely saved them from sore want.

The cause of the change may be partly guessed. A sensible old Dit had, by chance, come up on Lerilla's spade, when she and her daughter Cara were digging at a melon bed, and singing in concert. Her eldest boy, who was at work on a medlar tree at the other end of the garden, took his part also in their song. Daddy Lull sat in the sun, at the garden door, and listened idly to the jingle of Lerilla's rhyme of toil:—

“This our song all day long  
Will never cease. For increase  
To our store we implore!  
But we dare not despair  
While we live and can give.  
Can give our hearts to our neighbour;  
Can give our hands to our labour.  
The sky is light, the eye is bright,  
And trouble will set the garden right.  
Dig mother, dig maid!  
Blossom shall follow the stroke of the spade.”

“True hearts,” murmured the old Dit, Pulvillo, to himself. “Such wretched soil, too, as this is! But, never mind. I'll set the garden right for them.”



And so Pulvillo did. Sliding back into the earth again, he tickled the roots of every fruit and vegetable in Lerilla's patch of ground, exciting them all to the most unusual efforts. Strawberries became as large as the good mother's great, hard fist; the smallest apples in the garden were as big as the nine months' baby, and the gooseberries were so enormous, that the fame of them found its way into the newspapers of Teshu, and was even put upon record in the *Court Gazette* of the imperial metropolis.

Tcha, Tsar of Teshu, was leaner than a dragon-fly, and had as dusty a complexion. He had swallowed in vain every medicine in the drug list of his empire. When he went abroad, he travelled like a criminal with shot chained to his leg, lest any sudden puff of wind should carry him away. It was golden shot, exquisitely chased, inlaid with gems, and very costly. The Tsar's condition was a serious affair. Every right-minded courtier was bound to keep his master in good countenance by reducing his own bulk as much as possible. The more a man rose in the State, the less he might eat. Gruel and vinegar was all the diet of a gold-stick or a premier. Fetters became, of course, a part of every courtier's dress. Those gentlemen who were so constituted that they could not help becoming fat, even upon vinegar and gruel, carried about costly balls chained to their legs, as if they also dreaded eddies of the wind.

But this part of the fashion was no matter of complaint. Gentlemen gladly rivalled one another

in the costliness of their leg-chains, or the weight and enrichment of their golden balls. Persons of the middle class in Teshu, tied silver-gilt shot to their ankles. Lower down the social scale, copper-gilt and paste diamonds were in request. There was only the confessed beggar who did not at least wear lacquer. There was no dissatisfaction felt, then, about the ballast added to the leg; but there was serious objection to the loss of ballast from the person. The gruel and vinegar diet, the compelled abstinence from soup and beer, and other solaces of life, did not sit easily upon the stomach of the nation.

Nevertheless, the lords of the Imperial Court were loyal to a man. There was Foh, an ambassador from the neighbouring emperor of Papoo, settling terms of a peace at the court of Tcha. He was a long, straight-haired, grey-bearded, leathery-faced man, whose large spectacles were half hidden under snow-covered thickets of eyebrows. From under his white flowing robes there peeped only his naked bony arms with the long shrivelled talons that he used in fighting and in shaking hands. Foh made several vain attempts to set revolt on foot in Teshu. There was not a disloyal man in the whole empire.

One day, the Tsar Tcha, in the presence of Foh, was listening to his Reader. It happened then that a paragraph in the *Court Gazette* presented to his mind the exact dimensions of an Enormous Gooseberry, grown by a poor man named Lull, in his garden upon the borders of a distant province. "I should like very much," said the Tsar, "to know what

medicine was given to that gooseberry, that I might take it."

"Sire," said Foh, who was a Wise Man in his own land, "Your wish is just. That gooseberry was enlarged by the powers of nature working up through one of their outlets in the soil. There are spots on which visible water, in hot springs or cold springs, bubbles up out of the ground. There are other spots from which strange vapours rise. I have read, also, that there exist outlets or springs through which the unseen energies of nature, otherwise diffused over the earth, boil up and pour themselves abroad. A garden planted by chance over one of these invisible fountains, will doubtless produce fruit of an enormous size."

"Hah!" said his Majesty, "What if I were to suck at the ground in such a garden."

"I have read, Sire, and do not doubt, although never has the experiment been tried;—I have read, Sire,"—

"Well, man, speak. You know I am ready to try everything."

"I dare not suggest humiliation to a prince who is the Light of the Globe! But I have read, Sire, as matter of reading, the belief of sages that if it were possible for a common man to be enclosed, on such a spot, in any fruit large enough to contain him, great results might follow. If the soles of his feet were slightly scarified, and he were planted firmly and upright in the growing stem, these powers of nature, it is thought, would pour into him. So he could partake of the fruit's growth."

"Clearly this must be true," the Tsar exclaimed. "I am impatient to make the experiment. But—no—read me again the dimensions of that gooseberry."

"Sire, it may be that there are melons in this garden which have become wonderfully large."

"Good! Good! And there shall be no time wasted in the sending of a messenger. I will go travel. I will make a progress. I will look in upon Lull. The ministers of state go with us, and you also, my Lord Foh. If the cure fail, I am but as I am. For treachery, if you mean any, your head will answer."

"May the Tsar thrive as I am honest," said the wise Ambassador. "Then shall the earth quake at his footfall."

Daddy Lull baked in the sun at his front door, with his head half buried in the mighty nectarine he nursed upon his lap. Lerilla was at work behind the house, busy, with all her children round her. There was a heavy crop of fruit then being gathered, and poor neighbours outside the slender paling waited confidently for their ample shares. Birds carolled among the boughs, and the mother also carolled with her children, while their hands were busy—

"More, more, ever more and more!  
Our garners are full,  
Yet we pluck and we pull  
More, more, ever more and more!  
We are paid for our care,  
With far more than our share,

More, more, ever more and more !  
But we live and can give,—  
Can give our hearts to our neighbour,  
Can give our hands to our labour.  
The sky is light, the eye is bright,  
And trouble has set our garden right.  
Pluck, mother, pull maid !  
The work of the willing is richly paid.

A sound of martial music floated from afar over the plain, and a royal courier dashed up to Daddy Lull as he was getting near the stone of his big nectarine.

“One Lull, live here ?”

Lull opened his mouth.

“Fine melons ?”

Lull stared.

The man dashed round the corner of the house, saw a melon-garden worthy of a leader in the *Court Gazette*, and galloped back towards the horizon over which the Tsar's procession now began to show itself. The poor cottage was presently surrounded by the brilliant court of the Emperor Tcha, every dignitary being in a coach or on a horse that had a pouch for his master's legshot fastened as a sort of holster to the saddle.

Foh, the wise ambassador, made a profound bow to Daddy Lull, whose little ones stood near him with their fingers in their mouths, wondering at the fine show. When Lerilla heard her husband spoken to, she came forward, to save him the distress of groping for his brains in order that he might return some answer. But what thing was this? A royal camp

to be pitched for a week about her house ! A bag of gold for a week's use of her melon garden ! Soldiers and officers of state to watch about it ! Denial to the Tsar's commands was, of course, impossible. "I understand nothing about it, Cara," she said to her eldest daughter, "except that the gold will provide dowry for you and the other girls."

"Surely," Cara said, "our garden is under enchantment."

"If so, dear," answered the prudent woman, "we have used no other conjuring rod than an honest spade. We shall not depend upon magic if we do our duty to the ground and take what comes."

"I think, mother," said Cara, "we might as well go upstairs and look out of one of the back windows. Surely the King has not come here only to eat melons !"

Lerilla had the family dinner to prepare, but Cara ran upstairs to peep into the Melon Garden. Presently she cried, "Mother ! mother ! never mind the dinner. You must come ! They have scooped the seed out of our biggest melon and are putting the King into it. Surely this must be treason, revolution ! What are we to do ?"

Lerilla rushed out instantly to battle like a loyal woman for her sovereign, but was first repelled by files of soldiers, and then instructed by a friendly courtier as to the true state of the case. "That leathery man in the white robe," he said, "you may help us to watch. If there be treason, all of it is in his heart."

Lerilla watched Foh very closely, and could do so

easily, for he was often in the house or about the house doors talking to her husband. Lull was, to a certain degree, awakened by the conversation of this man. Lerilla never thought ill of her husband, and, considering that Foh was in good company, felt quite at ease.

The Tsar, with his feet lightly scarified by the Court Surgeon, had been duly grafted on the growing stem at the core of the melon. He ate of the wall of his chamber as it grew, but was kept in the dark as much as possible, because it is only on the surface of a fruit that the sun ought to shine. The trap-door by which he had entered the melon was removed occasionally for the admission of air. His Majesty had also a gong with him on which he struck whenever he desired any attention. The good-natured Dit, meanwhile, observed all that was passing, and exerted himself underground to such good purpose, that the Emperor developed rapidly. In five days he burst the melon that contained him, and stepped out the heaviest of monarchs. Before leaving the Melon Garden he enriched every member of Lerilla's household with gifts as substantial as himself.

The wise Ambassador, now in the highest favour with King Tcha, obtained immediately all the signatures he asked, and being near the borders of his own country, was left behind to travel homeward in an opposite direction. But he did not quit the house. He had persuaded Lull into a speculation. Dame Lerilla, secretly vexed at the great change in her household, was yet glad to think that her hus-

band had at last found the great work for which he was told he had been born, when his diploma came from one of the small universities of Papoo. Then the house was reconstructed on a noble scale, as the Imperial Melon Cure Establishment, by Doctors Lull and Foh. Their ground was covered with great melons cultivated by Lerilla and her children. All the great lords and ministers of state who had been thinning themselves upon gruel and vinegar, would now desire sudden enlargement of their persons. The imperial example would be followed. Almost without management of theirs every big melon they could grow would have a lord in it, as surely as there never is a decent blackberry without its maggot.

Though the Dit, Pulvillo, had a great contempt for Daddy Lull, yet, as he held firmly by the service of Lerilla, who was an obedient wife, the Melon Cure Establishment became renowned over all Teshu. Foh might have acquired sovereign wealth; but it was not for wealth that he had thirsted. When the drinking of waters was deserted by fashion for the sitting in melons, when the melon season came to be the time for rest from public business, and Lerilla's Melon Garden was, in that season, the focus to which rank and power centred, the traitorous Papoo chose well his time.

Scarification of the feet, with constant forcing in the melon bed, was used only in cases of extreme exhaustion. For the mere annual recruit of health, it was sufficient that the visitor slept every night within the melon which he rented, and, during the day, wandered among the wondrous nectarines and



peaches, using a fruit diet, with gentle exercise. A time came, in the height of the fashionable season, when the Tsar, and all his ministers of state, his generals, and his high clergy, were assembled at the Melon Garden. Then, in the night, the villain Foh received a hostile troop from his own country. Soldiers of Papoo, coming with muffled wagons, cut all the melons that contained the Tsar and the chief people of his empire, lifted them gently on the wagons, and then dragged them away into the midst of a vast invading army that was already across the frontier of Teshu.

But the King's son, the Prince Imperial, had been accustomed to indulge with serenades the beautiful Cara. Cara was apt to rise at sundry times from bed, and peep under her blind, hoping that she, perchance, might see the youth approaching with his viol. Hearing a movement in the house, she rose, and she it was who saw the garden lie under the moonlight, full of leaves, and empty of its melons. The soldiers galloping beside the melon carts were far away ; and out of a side gate suddenly dashed Foh, in military dress, urging a swift horse to full speed in the pursuit of them.

Cara ran to her father and her mother. Lull was asleep for the night, and no power could rouse him ; but Lerilla was brisk in an instant, hearing her daughter's report while she hurried on her clothes, and sounded an alarm throughout the house. " You are wrong, child," she said. " Foh is not in pursuit as the Tsar's friend. Why, did he slip out of the house, arousing nobody ? No, no. I was warned

to watch the leathery man in the white robe. His heart was treasonous, and I have trusted him. Alas ! alas !” By this time she was among the pillaged melon beds, wringing her hands. “Why did I not keep watch ? The ruin of the country will be at my door.”

But as she spoke, she saw the body of a worm upon the ground glow with warm light. It lifted up a head, half human and half worm-like, and said to her, “Be at ease, Lerilla. If harm come to the Tsar, it comes of my work in your service. But I love you well, and will not serve you ill. Leave those people to me.”

“And who are you ?”

“Pulvillo, an old Dit, who has been busy underground on your behalf, while you have been at work over my head. Your happy toil earned mine. Rely upon me. Follow the carts at once, and good will come.”

Pulvillo dived into the ground, and disappeared. Lerilla dressed her husband in his sleep, and caused him to be set by her side in a coach. Cara rode with her. The other children came on horseback with a rout of servants. They all journeyed at full speed till morning ; but Pulvillo was before them. When they came in sight of the immense encampment of the Papoo army, into the midst of which the melons, with the precious cores, had all been carried, Dame Lerilla’s heart quailed. They reached the outposts. There the soldiers slept, and, marvellous to see, they and their weapons were all overgrown with coils of ivy. At the tramp of

coming horses the men woke, struggled, and gave the alarm, but could not stir. So it was at the next station, so throughout the camp. Pulvillo, working underground with all his might, had forced up tough twining and creeping plants, that held every Papoo netted firmly in their meshes. At sunrise, when Tcha and all his mighty men awoke, and stepped out of their melons, there lay, at the Emperor's disposal, the whole host of his enemies bound hand and foot, the thickest coil of ivy being round the waist of Foh. Daddy Lull awoke at the same time, and found himself ready dressed, which was a comfort. But why he was riding in his carriage with his wife and Cara, why all his children and servants rode with him, through a howling wilderness—for every man caught in the leafy toils was howling or yelling—it almost occurred to him to ask.

Lerilla, seeing the Tsar safe; and he was to be seen from a great distance in his present ampler state; jumped out of her coach, to throw herself in supplication at his feet. She soon found that she had no pardon to entreat. She was no woman of mysteries, and fairly told all that she knew about the present aspect of affairs.

"Your husband's friend, Pulvillo," said his Majesty, "has not only served our royal person, but has now performed high service to the empire. Half a century perhaps of war is spared the country by this dexterous achievement. My Lord Doctor Lull," said the King, to the magnificent husband of Lerilla, "you will remove your family to the

metropolis. You will be always near our royal person. It is evident that our Melon Garden is unduly exposed upon the frontier, and that the power which exerted itself on your former ground, will work on the estates that I shall give you in the suburbs of our capital. Ah! ah! O—oh!” The Dit, who had been listening to all this speech, was nibbling angrily at one of the imperial toes. “A twinge of gout, for the first time in my life,” said Tcha, when the sharp agony was over.

The original Melon Garden was deserted. Lull and his whole family did go to Court. Lull did become the Court Physician, and he rose to a great eminence, by reason of his fine figure, his magnificent bald head, and his discreet habit of saying nothing. The depths of his mind were, to his dying day unfathomed, and were, therefore, held to be unfathomable. Great estates were given to him, and the planting of a central Melon Garden was requested by the State.

“Nothing will come of idleness,” Lerilla said. “The good Dit has been very kind. He will work with me again, perhaps, but, as he hinted, he worked with me and not for me. Already I have too large profit by the partnership, when for his best work I give only mine.” Therefore Lerilla spent her strength on the new land, and bound by a strong love to all her children, made them partners of her toil and true believers in her doctrine.

The Dit Pulvillo’s admiration for this noble-hearted dame rose to enthusiasm, and the estates given to her husband were enlarged annually by the

government when it was found how quickly they were covered with a wealth of fruits that were the wonder of the country. Very soon it was in the power of Lerilla to give to her eldest daughter such a dowry as a prince might ask, and she was married to the viol-playing heir-apparent of the empire. All Cara's sisters were well married before their mother died.

Until she died, her sons sustained her in her toil; but after she was gone from them they quickly learnt to look with scorn upon spade labour. They compared the little work that came of their best efforts, with the wonderful result. This brought them to the decision that their own part of the work was not worth giving; they would be perfectly content to receive the balance left after the issue of their personal toil was deducted from the magic help they got. Their sister's marriage gave them dignity, that they must needs sustain by ceasing to live in the rank of working-men. Before they came to this resolve, the Dit aided them faithfully. But when they gave themselves to idleness, a gnawing grief possessed him. He set cruel teeth in all the rootlets he had cherished; and there was a great marvel in the city when the fruit dropped rotten from the boughs in all its famous orchards, when the leaves turned yellow and black before their time, and in the midst of the bright autumn season, there was suddenly a winter of dead trees about the town.

From Lerilla's grave grew the one tree that flourished. Upon that Pulvillo spent his energy. A

mighty bread-fruit tree spread broad green branches, overshadowing the palace of the Emperor and all the haunts of fashion. It resisted time, and grew to be another marvel in the land.

Doctor Lull lives in Teshu to the ninth generation, embalmed in the annals of the profession he so greatly ornamented. But of Lerilla there is no trace left, except a vague tradition that this bread-fruit tree grew from a plank set in the coffin of a faithful and hard-working woman.



## A PATTERN OF DIGNITY.

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A CLEVERLY invented bird, that plumed itself and sang deliciously, was treasured under a glass case. A real bird in a cage who lived with it was well content to be less noticed. "My remarkable friend," he observed, "has the glass case always kept over him. It is to me only that people look for answer to a chirrup of their own; and I'm the bird that gets the seed and sugar."

A scholar overheard this shrewd soliloquy. "Bird," he said, laughing, "I perceive you are a philosopher. Solve me a problem. Tell me where to look for dignity. It is a thing I want."

"Look straight before you," said the bird. "I have it."

"You, indeed! Hopping, twittering, swinging yourself on your perch claws uppermost!"

"I am true to my own nature, man, and true to the bright heaven for which I was born. Does your pride want anything more or less? Apply to Clockworks, yonder, under the glass case."

"But, my good bird," said the questioner, "What if I also long to swing in my cage heels uppermost?"

"Then show your sense, and do it. Look at me!" Down the bird went, and up again.

"It would ruin me to do that," said the scholar.

"I flatter myself," chirped the bird, "that it would ruin Clockworks.—Who put *you* together?"



## TIGERSCLAW.

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Craggy and barren dales, through which only fine threads of water came, entangled among stones ; dry mountain sides jagged with the broken lines of dried-up water-courses ; crags of basalt and granite overhanging deep ravines ; sharp mountain ridges and fantastic peaks, were the chief features of the land over which Tigersclaw was ruler. He was the prince of a barbaric race of men, and had his court in a



great palace hewn out of a mountain. In his boyhood, when his father reigned, a tiger had leaped down upon him and had been seized by him, with naked hands and arms. The beast was vanquished in that wrestle, and the boy returned triumphant to his father's court, carrying a fore-leg of the dead tiger, wrenched out of its socket at the shoulder-joint. The tiger's leg, straightened and dried, with claws outspread, became thenceforth the war-club of the prince. It was alike terrible as his war-club and as his sceptre, when he became the only master of his nation.

The men subject to Tigersclaw were, like himself, fiercer and more stalwart than men of other races; they were keen-eyed, hook-nosed, and largely bearded. Their long black hair, coarse and straight, fell across backs and shoulders covered with the skins of beasts of prey, in which alone these warriors clothed themselves. No man might wear a skin that he had not stripped from a beast of his own slaying. He who could not master a leopard, would chase the wild cat. But they ranked highest in the state whose loins were furry with the skins of lions, tigers, or, chief dignity of all, were plated with impenetrable dragon-scales.

That was an honour won by few. If dragons were not very rare, all life but their own would wither in the pestilence they breathe out of their nostrils. Tigersclaw having slain one dragon, had journeyed into a far land to destroy another, and thereby assure to himself his rank in his own kingdom. Of the livid scales of the first dragon, shining still by

their own baleful light, there had been made for his huge limbs the armour that he never put aside ; and over this he carried, when at home, a robe and train made of the blood-red plumage of the other dragon. It had been a feathered monster, with a bristly head. Over his torrent of rough hair he wore a three-fanged dragon's tooth as helm or crown, and went armed with no other weapon than his club. His palace was a single hall, scooped, ages before his birth, out of the substance of the greatest mountain in the land. The skins gathered by his ancestors during a thousand centuries, and many of them falling into dust, tapestried the vast walls only as high as a club could strike. Above this, all was crag, that rose till it was lost in the darkness of the empty vault. An ancient settle, raised upon a bank of earth, backed by the largest skins and marked by a canopy of jutting granite, was the king's hereditary throne. Grated gates, concealed by the tapestry behind the throne, led up a score or two of steps hewn in a rock gallery to the dungeons with which all the rest of the great rock was honey-combed. The thickness of the walls about that hall of state was everywhere pierced with dungeons having rat-holes to admit the outer air and light. The enemies of Tigersclaw, went to the wall when they became his prisoners. They and their jailors in their cells and corridors served as a contrivance for producing warm air, let into the stone of the barbarian's mountain palace.

Tigersclaw sat after sunset frowning on his throne in the great hall of state, surrounded by his thousand captains. His black eyes glared over his beard, his

dragon scales gleamed from his arms and legs, the lurid coils of his red dragon-robe lay on the mound behind him, ghastly to see. Battle with him would be as horrible as battle with the dragon that he almost seemed to be. The captains were about him, many of them mounted upon camels, stirring their large hairy arms from under spotted skins, and looking wilder when they drew over their own wild black hair a lion's mane, upon a hide clasped to their backs by the two fore-feet joined about the throat. Their eyes were bloodshot and their gestures fierce. A troop of plunderers, some upon camels, few upon horses, many on foot, entered the hall to produce their prey. There were a dozen prisoners, and some heads of cattle, with but little grain or other wealth, for the surrounding countries had already been devastated far and wide by Tigersclaw's wild hordes, eager to find abroad the riches that had been denied to their own land. The men of this troop panted, and their eyes also were bloodshot.

"Ho!" roared Tigersclaw. "When you were sent to find water, do you bring me only slaves and oxen?"

"My lord," said a wild fellow on a dromedary. "We found water."

"Your water skins are empty," thundered the King, clutching his club. "You mock; you die."

"Stay, my lord," said the chief of the band, putting a young woman forward. "This is the culprit."

Tigersclaw lightened when he saw her in her loose blue robe, and her fair flowing locks, standing

forward from among his wild men, frail and fearless.

"Ha!" he said. "You are to be my prisoner? Tell me her crime."

"We found," said the captain, "a full fresh stream in a glade beyond the frontier, and when we went to fill our skins, this girl was bathing in it. So we haled her out, and it may be she was beaten. When we went to get our water the stream had run dry. What is she but a curser of the water-springs?"

"You do not flinch, girl. Is this true?" the King asked, fiercely.

"True, to the best of his knowledge," said the prisoner.

"You seem not to be made of trembling stuff."

"Yes I am, rather."

"Your name?"

"Rill."

At a sign from Tigersclaw, the girl was led round his chair. He seized his club and scowled at her as she passed it smiling; but she followed her grim guides into one of the cells beyond the grating. The King then drank from a small tank of water in the middle of the hall; each captain drank as much as could be lifted in the hollow of his hand before retiring from the audience, and the common soldiers went thirsty as they came.

Then Tigersclaw, wrathful at the slippery trick she had played his men, piqued by her mocking air, and somewhat attracted by the sparkle of her beauty, went up to the dungeon of his captive Rill.

"At last," said Rill, "you wait upon me."

"Yes," answered the Dragon King. "I and my club."

"Well said, my friend. You and your club. I will find good use for your club."

"That I find ready to my hand," said Tigersclaw, furiously swinging his great weapon and aiming a death-stroke at the head of his prisoner. The club, as it struck, only splashed water on the wall.

"Now," said Rill, "you have knocked on the head the best chance of a comfortable life that ever came in the way of a King of tiger-skinners. Out of my path, I am going."

Tigersclaw did step back as the floor of his cell suddenly melted into water under Rill's feet, and the water rising, poured down into his great hall. The maid passed out lightly on its surface, and the King—eager to drink, eager to strike again—partly pursued, partly was driven in pursuit, by the descending torrent. The waters rose in the hall, eddied among his ancestral tapestries, and swept every skin from the walls. As he was lifted from his feet, and clung for support to the canopy above the royal settle, that sacred chair began to dance upon the whirlpool pouring down behind it, and dashed forward in mid-current. Upon this Rill leapt, and swiftly rode upon it. The royal skins danced in its wake, bobbing up and down in the great swirl of water like a shoal of porpoises. So they sped beyond the gates of the mountain, with a roar and a rush through the dale, and down, at last, through a dark yawning hole, to the abysses of

the earth. All the water that had risen, following the same course, ran away, and was lost in the same unfathomable gulf, that was as a great well suddenly struck open by the force of nature. Not a drop of all the water that had rinsed his palace remained anywhere to comfort Tigersclaw, or any of his subjects.

For a week, Tigersclaw raged with an ungovernable fury. He caused rocks and stones to be hurled continually down the gulf, into which Rill had disappeared. But this was thirsty work. The few streams that had been trickling in his land dried up. Tigersclaw fell into madness, and when he had ceased throwing stones, he suddenly cast himself also, club in hand, into the well.

Through the water at the bottom, by which the shock of his fall was broken, he descended into a cell that resembled one of his own palace dungeons vastly enlarged, and having water in the place of stone for walls and roof. But it was nearly filled with the huge heap of all the stones that had been cast down by his orders. The dive through the water, of which, in his passage, not a little found its way into his stomach, and soaked through the pores of his dry skin, refreshed and soothed the tyrant, whom thirst had been torturing. He sat upon the heap of stones, rejoicing at the moisture that was on him, in him, and about him, when Rill entered.

"Again," she said, "you and your club. Well?"

"Prisoner Rill," said Tigersclaw; "that water seems to have washed something out of me. You are no longer my prisoner, and I am yours."

"This," said Rill, "is the particular well, at the bottom of which Truth lies. It is generally known that Truth lies at the bottom of a well, and many wells have been searched, in hope that one of them might prove to be THE well, into which it is your good fortune to have jumped."

"I have been a fool," said the grim King. "Drown me, Rill."

"First let me hear why you think yourself a fool?"

"I have been feeding prisoners, when we had not enough of food and water for ourselves."

"So you would kill your prisoners if you got back into your palace?"

"I would set them free, give them fair, honest words at parting, and recover, through them, some of the rich neighbours I have lost."

"That you might be able to plunder them again?"

"That we might exchange help with each other. Drown me, Rill. I had a fool's pride in my strength."

"And now you scorn it?"

"No, I do not. Now I feel that it was the root of peace, from which I tortured but a sickly growth of war. Rill, when I look at you, I think you mean it to be well with me. You flooded my palace. You can let the water-courses loose over my land. And let me also loose."

"As for you," said the Fairy, "look to this mountain of stones hurled down upon me in a six days' shower. I shall send you up again

to your own people. If you really do dismiss your prisoners, as you have said, then you will only have to carry all those stones out of the well again with your own hands, in order to secure my help."

"You mock," said Tigersclaw. "Woe 's me! That is a work of thirty years."

"With industry, it can be achieved, I think, in twenty. Many a nobler man than Tigersclaw has laboured all his life in work that seemed to be as fruitless, and has longed in vain to see before he died his hope achieved, in the unsealing of the water-springs for which he thirsted. But I have pity on you, who were pitiless; my easy terms shall be made easier. While you submit faithfully, and toil for the well-being of your country, one brook, at least, shall always flow for the refreshment of its people."

Very potent, indeed, was the water of the well; and Tigersclaw submitted to the Fairy. Having been lifted to the well's edge by a rising spring, he went directly to his palace, and dismissed, with friendly words, his prisoners of war. Then, slinging a large pouch over his dragon scales before him and behind him, he became as a bucket that descended and ascended fifty times a day, bringing back from the bottom of the well, at each ascent, as large a burden of stones as his brawny limbs could bear. A rill, that grew into a river, wound its way across his land, and begot herbage on its banks. While his tiger club rested against a stone by the well's mouth, for twenty years the rough King laboured



daily in the well of Truth, and brought up stones. But the last load of stones was followed by a spring that floated up the royal settle, and a wet heap of the skins of beasts.

"There is your throne again," the Fairy said, "and all your tapestry. You may chop that up to enrich the fields, for which you will, in the next place, have to pay me homage."

"Homage, what homage?"

"When you and your club waited on me," answered Rill, "I promised to find good use for your club. Every year, in the spring time, the first acre of ground that is sown shall solemnly be raked with that claw by the King's own hands, in the presence of the chief men of the State. By that homage you, and those who shall come after you upon this settle, hold what you receive of me. Is it agreed?"

"Fairy, you are my counsellor," said Tigersclaw.

"Then go up to the summit of your mountain palace, and assemble there your captains."

The King did so. From that lofty peak there was a wide prospect of dry, stony mountain sides, crags of basalt overhanging waterless ravines, fantastic peaks, and the one green dale through which flowed the Fairy river given to the warriors of the wilderness. The afternoon sun in a sultry sky scorched the King's cheek; while, even upon the peaks, or in the barren hollows, there was not a breath of wind astir. Presently, a sound was beneath the King's feet, as of plash of sea in summer-time within a cavern. The open dungeons were all

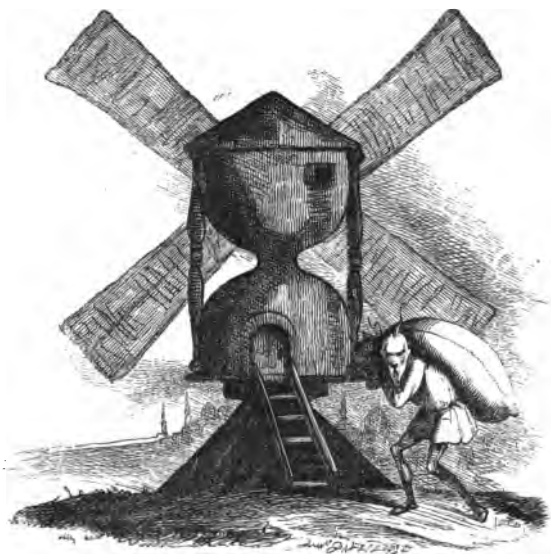
flooded, and out of the rat-holes, by which light and air had entered them, water poured down over the surface of the mountain. Then, far and near, the twisted torrents sparkled in the sun, as they leapt from the height of stony precipices. A deluge beat down heavily from a black rock that overhung the stony valley, near the palace gates. It roused the echoes with its booming, and the mist that was about its chaos filled the air below the King's feet with a rainbow glory. Then, as far as eye could reach, the whole of the wild country was seen covered with a silver network of broad rills. Everywhere the hearts of the wild hunters leapt when they heard in their deserts the bubbling, and the rippling, and the gurgling of the running streams.

By this gift, of course, the face of nature became changed. The grizzly and now venerable King, when the first grain had been sown on watered ground, solemnly raked an acre of soil with his tiger's-claw. His subjects, little used to arts of peace, made huge clubs with clawed ends, after the model of that used by their chief. These were for centuries the only rakes or harrows used upon that land.

Tigersclaw died, and was buried by a running stream. Kings, who succeeded him, governed a strong-limbed, peaceful race, brawny with toil, and rich in all its produce. Neighbours multiplied, and lived with it in friendly commerce, till a distant predatory chief heard how this race, once terrible in war, was, at last, wholly occupied with its own

industry, and had made even a clod-crusher of the historic Tiger's Claw. Then a fierce horde advanced on what was thought to be an undefended land. But, at a word, every man's rake became his club, and, in a month, the land of peace held every invader crushed among its clods.





## THE FAIRY MILL.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### BLUNT'S MILL.

ONCE upon a time, there lived a Gaffer Blunt, who was an honest miller, and the only one of all his nation, but he had no sons. He was a lean old man, with natural white, as well as flour in his hair, with a bony, wrinkled face, tremulous hands, and

tattered, dusty clothes. Teardrops often made little puddings in the corners of his eyes, by rolling themselves over the flour that gathered in his wrinkles.

Miller Blunt had an old wife, as honest, as lean, and as feeble as himself; but within their stooping, tottering bodies, the old Gaffer and Gammer retained hearts as young and beautiful as that of the one child, the bud of their autumn, the plump little daughter, Althy, who would rather frisk with them than with the gayest of her child companions. Miller Blunt and his wife were children in their hearts. They starved secretly, and made great show of feasting, while they gave their substance to the building up of a brave child. They talked like merry babies for her entertainment till she was in bed, and then sat in the dark by the mill door, with nothing but their love to light and warm them. The old wife would hold one of her husband's hands between her folded palms, and they would talk together of the little one. So they lived over again in memory the joys and sorrows of her day of dawning life, reciting to each other Althy's whims and words, until they crept away to sleep, and dreamt of her.

These people occupied a ruinous old mill, standing alone upon a hill beside an inlet of the sea. There were other mills on other hills; but none so ruinous as this. Their owners took what they required out of the corn sacks, and yet knew how to return them full. Below the grassy mount which the mill crowned, were the rough stones of the shore, passing

into a broad bank of mud, covered only at high water by the estuary. From his mill door, Miller Blunt looked down upon a fort built to command the entrance to the harbour, thence he looked on to the great inlet of the sea, and the wide ocean from which it flowed. Across the peopled waves his eye dimly discerned a line of palaces and temples, flashing now and then from golden minarets a starlike spot of light. There lay the wealth and power of the mighty city of Favilla, chief town of the empire of that name.

"Only two pecks of flour to-day," said the old man one evening to the old woman, "and they will not be called for till to-morrow. Is there nothing, nothing in the house?"

The Miller's wife looked grave. "If it were not a sin," she said, "to take a handful from that bag, only to make a little cake for Althy's supper. I cannot help the thought, husband."

"What wonder?" said the Miller. "But we will not now, in our old age, depart from the just measure."

"For the first time in her life, supperless," the mother said; "and see how she is running to us hungry from her play."

The old man took the blooming child upon his knee. "You are ten years old, Althy," he said.

"Yes," she answered; "we are three old people. And I wonder how old is the mill!"

"A broken-down mill, darling, is it not?"

"All to bits," said the child.

"Not a broken-down Miller, too, Althy. Not

broken down, with you upon his lap. If your mother sits by your bed, and sings to you, can you sleep to-night without your supper?"

The child quietly put her arms about his neck, and would have sobbed, had she not changed her mood by a brave effort.

"Then," she said, "you must both put me to bed, and let us have romps."

Children are wiser than old people generally think. Althy raised the Gaffer and the Gammer into a high state of glee before she would begin to try to go to sleep. Then the old man came back into his cheerless room under the mill, and sat on a step of the ladder, listening to the hum of his wife's voice, as she crooned a sacred song over the child.

But there was no food for her when she awoke. That must not be. So, when his wife came out on tiptoe from the little closet in which Althy slept, still humming the tune in a low whisper, he began to button up his coat—cloak he had none—and told her that it was not too late to carry that small bag of flour home to its owner, and get paid directly for the grinding. Then he could buy something for breakfast before Althy woke. That was good sense, and not to be gainsaid. The Miller, therefore, slung the bag over his old shoulders, and tottered away down the hill.

His wife looked after him till he was out of sight, and then perceived a soft light in the room. She turned, and saw that where the bag of flour had lain, there stood a Fairy.

"Your husband," said the Fairy, "is a Just Man."

"As just," said the old Dame, "as he is gentle."

"And I see that he has not thriven by his honesty."

"He has love and peace under his roof," the Gammer answered, proudly. "That is thriving."

"I will bring custom to his mill. It is no longer what it was this morning."

"Ah," said the Gammer, "it was ruinous enough, but I have laid away my spectacles, and cannot see where it is changed."

"From the Fairy Court to-night my gossips will fly abroad, spreading a rumour of the truth. You will have much custom to-morrow, and grind other things than corn. Whatever betides, fear nothing. Henceforth, this is a Fairy Mill."

The Fairy vanished suddenly, and Gammer Blunt looked for her spectacles; but when she found them, and had lighted a small pine stick to assist her in her exploration, she could see no change whatever, and was very sure she had been dozing. As the pondering on dreams, like the telling of dreams, is idle work, she then began to look for the return of her husband, who came late, with sticks upon his back, that he had stayed to gather by the way.

"Our neighbour had no money ready," he said, "and as our need presses, I begged to be paid in flour. He was angry, and will deal with us no more; but I am paid in flour enough to make a cake. We must rise early, Dame, and give the little one hot dough-cake for her breakfast."



With that comfortable thought for their own supper, the Miller and his wife retired. It was usual with them, for reasons of their own, to breakfast together before the awaking of the child. So, when Althy had her breakfast of hot cake, there was a reserve of dumpling for her dinner, and of, at worst, some other form of flour and water for her tea. But to the new day would belong also, no doubt, some fresh morsel of earning for the maintenance of life in the mill.

After breakfast, mother and daughter set forth to a village two miles inland, to fetch a bag of corn from a house that gave a trifle of work to the old Miller on that day in every week.

The Gaffer went to meet the ferry from Favilla, by which, sometimes, there would come a heavy sack for him to grind. To-day, four warriors were in the boat, and when they asked, as they leapt out, for Blunt's mill, and were told that he was Miller Blunt, suddenly they made him their prisoner, and marched him up to his own door again. There was a fleet of state barges half across the water, and, in a very little time, the King of Favilla, with his glittering Court about him, and a troop of soldiers in gold armour, were also coming up the hill.

"Is that the Miller?" the King asked.

The soldiers, who held him, bowed to the earth before their master, and said, "Yes."

"Set your sails to the wind, my good man."

Trembling in the presence of so much splendour, the poor old man obeyed. There was a stiff breeze,

and soon the mill was in full sail, grinding heavily at nothing.

"You venture to tell me that this is a Fairy Mill which grinds up all that is false, and lets all that is honest pass unhurt."

"Sublime Lord," said the Gaffer, "no. This is a poor old mill that my father left to me when I was a boy, and by which I have striven hard to earn a feeble living."

"Hear me, my man," said his Majesty. "Seventy-nine Lords of my Court dreamed last night that this mill was become as I say. They were told, also, in their dreams, that the truth of its power might be proved upon the Miller himself, who was honest enough to pass without a bruise from between his own mill-stones. Seventy-nine Lords do not dream one dream for nothing. I myself, the King, I dreamed it, and I never dream in vain. This shall be tried. Produce the cat."

A cat, known to be false, having been brought in a bag for the purpose of experiment, was, by the King's order, cast into the mill, and came through it in the form of powder.

"Now," said his Majesty, "cast in the Miller."

With a piteous glance in the direction of the village from which his old Gammer and his Althy must be by this time returning, Gaffer Blunt submitted to his fate. But he came out from between the stones without a bruise. His hair seemed to have been newly combed, his clothes were smoothed, and the white dust had been brushed out of them; there was no other change.

"Miller," the King said to the astonished Gaffer, "I am your friend. Two trials more I have to make. Bring forward the diamonds."

A handful of diamonds, equal in size, twelve of them true, the others false, were thrown into the mill. The twelve true diamonds fell out unhurt, the rest rained down as a fine powder. "And now," said his Majesty, "the deeds." An armload of written parchment, composed partly of true documents, partly of forged, was thrown into the mill. All the forged documents were ground to powder, but the true documents came out unharmed.

"Enough," said the King. "Present the bag."

A bag that chanced to be of the exact size and form of the bag in which he had carried the flour home to his neighbour over-night, was then presented to the miller on a purple velvet cushion by four pages in amber satin. It was bursting with gold coins as large as oyster-shells.

"You will receive such a purse weekly," said the King. The nation rents of you this Fairy Mill. Nothing is to pass through it except on a warrant under our Great Seal. To your proved honesty we trust the direction of the works. Guards will be set at the door, and the fort below shall be strongly held for the defence of our state Oracle."

## CHAPTER II.

## SHARP'S MILL.

WHEN Gammer Blunt came home with Althy, Althy trundling a bag of corn before her on a little wheelbarrow, there was a shining of gold armour and jewelled robes and a waving of soft many-coloured plumes and silken pennons all over the hill; and up the hill there was the king folding the old man in a parting embrace, so that he was almost buried and lost under the folds of the royal mantle, which received upon it much stain of white powder from his clothes. The grand procession then marched down-hill to the barge, and its band went with it piping, trumpeting, and drumming.

"My dream," said the Gammer, when her husband told her what he could understand about his morning's work. "Where all that gold is, stood the Fairy. Deary dear! What shall we do now with Madam Perk's corn! She must bake this evening, and the wheat cannot be ground by us without an order under the Great Seal! Couldn't you run after the King and ask him for an order?"

"I know what I shall do," said the old man. "I must ask Miller Sharp, on the next hill, to grind this wheat for me."

"But he will steal some and spoil the rest. The corn is in our trust, husband, to deal justly with."

"Miller Sharp," said the Gaffer, "will let me

wait while it is ground, and will not quarrel if I give him one of these gold pieces."

So, in his own plain-dealing way, the Gaffer made a clean breast of his case to his neighbour, who congratulated him with warmth on his good fortune, and delivered himself of a long whistle when he toddled away in the direction of Madam Perk's house, carrying the just weight of honest flour.

But the King of Favilla was the happiest of men. He exulted and he chuckled over his new mill till dinner-time, and after dinner as he sat in the midst of a heap of fruit on golden dishes, beside wine in jewelled jars and goblets, amused by lute-players and flute-players, and in company with all the chief men of his Court, drest in their best, he rose and drank, "To the regeneration of the state! Grist to the Mill!"

"Ha," he said as he sat down. "We shall be deceived no longer in this kingdom. We shall send everything through our Royal Mill. Gentlemen of the Ministry and Privy Council, you will take precedence, and submit to the test of truth to-morrow. We are assured already of your loyalty. For you this is but a form, in which it becomes the highest to set an example to those lower in estate."

"Hear, hear," said the whole Court, with every man's eyes fixed on the King. His Majesty, paying no heed to the hint thus given him, went on to say that he should expect every regiment in his army to be led in file between the mill-stones by the Commander-in-Chief and the great military officers. But, before the army, he would offer the test to the

church. Led by Archbishops and Bishops, all the clergy were to be submitted to the Fairy test. Then he would have the mill to grind over the members of the Great National Council. Then should follow the trade guilds. No time must be lost. The destruction of dishonesty throughout his land could not begin too soon or be carried on too rapidly. "It is our pleasure," he said, "to begin with the Ministers of State at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Would it not be inconvenient to your Majesty to rise so soon?" asked the Chief of his Council. "Our sublime Lord does not usually quit his chamber before noon."

"No matter," said the King. "We have evidence that the word of the Miller may be trusted. We depend on him."

"We are in ecstasy, sublime Lord, with this opportunity of putting our truth to the test, and will follow your Majesty even between the mill-stones."

"Follow me! Pooh," said the King, "you know me well enough."

"It is a mere question of form," said the Chief Lord. "We all know that our sublime Lord is the most faithful among men. But how will the weak minds be strengthened when the becoming example has been set them by the highest in the land, and pledges of mutual fidelity are thus again exchanged between the King and People! Our master, as head of the Government, the Church, and the Army, will surely lead each section of the state in this path of improvement as in every other."

"You are quite right," said his Majesty.

“Are orders to be given that your Sublimity’s barber be in readiness at three to-morrow morning, that the sublime breakfast be laid at half-past three, and that the barge be in readiness at half-past four?”

“Certainly,” said the King.

And in that mood his Majesty retired early to bed, but in that mood he was not found by the barber at three o’clock in the morning. The sublime breakfast waited eight hours and a-half. At noon his Majesty descended from his chamber.

“It occurred to us in bed, my Lord,” he said to the Chief of his Council, “that it was not worth while to rise in the middle of the night for the purpose of giving evidence on that which everybody knows. Neither is it fit that we should show the faintest distrust of the gentlemen of our court, by asking for an extraordinary test of the fidelity they daily prove. In this emergency a question arises as to our royal self. I, myself, am determined to pass through the mill.”

“Ah, Sire,” said the Chief Lord, “you cannot wound our feelings more than by the distrust of our reliance on your Excellency that you must show if you submit to the form of passing through this mill. But, alas! you are resolved.”

“We are very resolved,” the King said.

Then the Chief Lord went out and gathered all the courtiers about the breakfast-table, to entreat his Majesty that he would display so much confidence in the respect felt for him by all his subjects as not to afflict them. Afflict them he would, if he

submitted himself to a test that would prove nothing more than they already knew, except his doubt of their true reverence for all his goodness and his greatness. Upon which, his goodness and his greatness said that, as it appeared they would not let him read his newspaper, in which he had found the report of a most excellent acquittal of a poisoner, unless he granted what they asked, he was forced to submission. Let them send to him his Librarian.

The Librarian came. "Load all my books," said his Majesty, "in wagons. Send them across the water to the Fairy Mill, and let them be revised."

"But, sublime Lord—"

"We will have no denial, no delay. If we do not send men in the flesh under the mill-stone, let them be tried as paper. Away! Is there to be no peace for us, because the newspaper is readable this morning?"

The Royal Library went to the mill. After two days, his Majesty, about to ride out hunting, saw ten wagons loaded heavily with flour sacks at his door. Then followed ten more wagons, packed to a great height with damaged books. Then followed the Librarian on horseback, tearing his hair.

"Sire, I resign!" he shouted, when he saw the King. "Behold the condition in which your books have been sent back from yonder mill! Some come with their covers almost gutted; there is hardly one that has not sheets or pages torn away or mutilated. The King's library is reduced to half its size, and all that is left of it is in rags and tatters. It is a



spectacle for honest men to weep over. Unless you hang that Miller, I resign."

"Peace, friend," said the King. "We shall now get a meal of knowledge from the pith of books. But what are these bags of flour?"

"The Miller, Sire," said a Captain of Guard, "would not suffer them to be left. It is the dust of the lost books, and he seemed to consider the obtaining of it the chief purpose of our grinding. He reproved your officers, Sire, when they desired to leave the flour behind, and take only what he called the bran."

"This is an honest fellow," said the King. "Fetch me a Trumpeter."

The Trumpeter came. "Go out," said his Majesty, "and proclaim our will that all the goods in the shops of this city of Favilla be passed through the Fairy Mill. As soon as these carts are unloaded, let them convey the goods of the shopkeepers to the water-side."

After a week, the King's breakfast-table was loaded with petitions, and his ways were beset with ruined tradesmen, groaning widows, and an angry populace.

"I am a lost man," said the goldsmith. "You take, Sire, my chains and watches, and my services of plate, returning only dust."

"Doubtless," the King suggested, "your gold was of unjust quality, your powdered watches not what they professed to be."

"I am undone," said the draper, "by the grinding and the tearing of that mill."

"There will be no food left for the people," said the baker. "The demon mill has crumbled all my loaves."

"Doubtless they were not so pure as you would have had men take them to be," said the King; "or they were short weight? Sell honest bread, and never fear the Miller Blunt."

The Miller Sharp saw how the tide was running. Court and city were in utter desperation, but the King was calm. Though his books had been mangled, many of his State ornaments returned as powder, and a whole service of plate, fraudulent in quality, had been ground into flour, he was delighted with his mill. He had put, for that last matter, his goldsmith in the stocks.

Miller Sharp, when he saw how the public became more and more desperate about his Majesty's infatuation, called on the Chief of the Council, and made a communication to that dignitary. The Chief of the Council then paid mysterious visits to great lords, who visited other lords, and after three weeks of outcry and confusion, there was a wide wonderment in the palace. This lord, that lord, and the other lord—seven hundred and ninety-three important people, when one came to number them—had all dreamt in one night that a mistake had been made as to the situation of the Fairy Mill; that Sharp's mill was the one indicated; and that Gaffer Blunt was a trickster, who had been seizing plate and jewels in exchange for flour.

"The number of dreamers is great," said the

King. "But it is strange that I am not among them. Let us try Sharp's mill."

The State barges went again over the ferry, and the Miller Sharp found himself suddenly seized. He had already removed his mill-stones, and when told that he must pass through the hopper, made no difficulty, and came down through the free space he had made for himself, looking as honest as he could.

"Very good," said the King. "Produce the cat!"

"But Miller Sharp, knowing his Majesty's antipathy for cats, and having heard his neighbour's story, was prepared for any test of this sort. The lords, who were conspirators with him, let the cat loose on the roof, while there was dust thrown before the King's eyes for his satisfaction.

The conspiracy, in short, succeeded. Miller Sharp buried his mill-stones in ten feet of earth, and let everything pass through his mill unhurt, to the delight of everybody: except when he could, without risk of offending men in power, seize for his own use some poor man's goods, and throw down dust for them, as evidence that his mill really had discrimination.

Sharp's mill, therefore, was praised of men. Gaffer Blunt's premises were searched; but as there could be found nothing that would convict him of a robbery, and the King himself had not dreamed of his dishonesty, he simply was deprived of all that had been given him and all that he had, except the mill. The weekly bag of gold was transferred to his neighbour.

Now, therefore, on many a night, little Althy really had to go without her supper. The old Gaffer lived by labour of his body, for his mill, clever as it was, would not grind wheat into flour, even if the old custom had returned to it.

## CHAPTER III.

## DUST.

FAR away, among inland glades, the Fairies played under the Midsummer moon. Time slips but lightly over Fairy-land. Seven years had run by since the good-natured Fairy, Twinkle, had been witness to the tenderness and honesty of Gaffer Blunt, and had obeyed a sudden impulse in rewarding it with Fairy power. Under the Midsummer moon, Fairies, for very idleness, were playing foot-ball with a grass-seed, or were climbing gossamer threads in the brake, when Queen Titania declared that there must be some active entertainment furnished for her. Then it occurred to Twinkle that a pleasant little expedition might be made.

So she cried, "Sheen, Glance, Mote, Flash, playfellows all, come! Do you remember when, the other night, seventy-nine of us carried dreams into Favilla? Dreams about an honest Gaffer of a Miller, when I made a Fairy Mill. What a Princess must that little daughter of theirs be by this time. Time! Why, she is seventeen years old! How proud the old people must be! Away!

Let us all take the Queen seaward to see how the mill goes ! ”

Enough for light hearts is a light suggestion. Like a swarm of gnats, away the merry little friends of all good people flew. But her Majesty, when she set out, asserted dignity by giving herself size enough for comfortable riding on a dragon-fly.

When they came to the sea, across which glittered all night long the lights of Favilla, the moon shone on the rippling waters and upon the caps of sentinels pacing the walls of the heavily armed fort ; she touched also with silver light the edges of the wind-mill sails upon adjacent hills. One of them was old and lone, the other one in good repair, walled round, and guarded by patrols.

“ Joy ! joy ! ” cried Twinkle. “ See how they take care of my mill. Let us all look in upon my dear old Gaffer.”

All the Fairies entered Sharp’s mill by the key-hole. Titania went in also, leaving her ‘dragon-fly’ outside in charge of Fairy grooms.

Within the mill, there was a loud snoring. Drunk on the floor lay a fat, dirty, low-browed man, in costly clothes. Sacks of gold were about the walls, and there was a spreading puddle of gin on the floor, for the tap had been left unturned in the cask, from which Sharp had been drinking.

The Fairies were in consternation, and were flying out again ; but “ Stay, playfellows, stay,” cried Twinkle. “ This is no Gaffer of mine. Here is some terrible mistake. I must see to it ; but

pray, pray, pray don't leave me in this dreadful place alone. Go through the mill with me."

The swarm of Fairies flew about the place. They rose to the hopper, and saw that there were no mill-stones under it. Above it was a floor covered with what they all knew to be spoils of the poor. Though there was all the gold below, there were the spoils of the wretched stored above; the goods for which Sharp had thrown dust down to prove that his mill had in it strength for condemnation.

"To the other mill!" cried Twinkle. "O, I have been away too long; have neglected cruelly my own work. Pardon me, dear Queen."

Her Majesty having sent home her dragon-fly, the swarm flew through the key-hole of the other mill, and Twinkle knew the place; but it was wretched now, and empty.

The old Gaffer was to be seen by the moonlight, that poured through the holes of the mill-wall, tottering stealthily out of his sleeping corner, with a ragged blanket in his hand. The Fairies danced as gnats about his head. He groped his way with the steps of a thief, to the cupboard in which lay a fair girl, in old, worn, mended clothes, with a hay-rake by her side, peacefully sleeping upon straw.

Stealthily the old Gaffer spread the blanket over her, smoothed it tenderly and lightly with his trembling hands, then folded them together for an instant over the head of his Althy, and fled, when a ray of moonlight suddenly fell on her sleeping lids. The Fairies followed him to the straw in which he lay with his old Gammer, in a corner of the floor,

and heard him triumph in cracked whispering at his achievement.

"She will be out at sunrise, to go to the hay-field," he said. "Go to sleep, old woman. I shall be awake to take the blanket back before she rouses. She works hard, and sleeps well. O, never fear me!"

"You go to sleep, old man," said Gammer. "I shall fetch it away in proper time. Why won't she consider that she lies alone, and nights are chill here, by the sea. Poor child!"

"How she watches us, and cares for us," said the old man. "What a pleasure it is to outwit her."

"I 'm afraid," said Gammer, "that, as the gnats have come into the house, we shall have bad weather for the hay-making."

"Ah, dear, dear!" said the old man. "Go to sleep, we mustn't wake poor little Althy by our whispering."

"Is this your Fairy blessing, sister Twinkle?" asked the Queen, when the Fairies had flown up and down the mill, only to find it empty.

"Let us not rest," said Twinkle, "until we know all, and have set matters right again!"

"Our hands upon that," said the Queen; and all the Fairies, joining tiny hands, danced in a great circle round the mill before they hurried to the shore, and sped, in the form of a flight of sea-gulls, across the water to Favilla, where they again took the shape of gnats.

It was an hour past midnight when they all arrived at the King's palace, where a magnificent

State Ball was blazing. The gnats flew in, and darting hither and thither with ears open to all talk, frequently meeting, crossing, and exchanging notes with one another, brought within ten minutes the whole truth to the ears of Titania.

"Good, very good," said the Queen. "Be of cheer, Twinkle! We ephemerals will teach these people something. As for your old friends and their daughter, they have kept a blessing in their hearts beyond all giving of ours, but they shall receive justice also from the Fairies. So shall that hog. Come hither, Fairies!"

All the Fairies gathered about their Queen, who was hovering over a bunch of artificial flowers in the head of a fair Princess. "Those flowers are beautiful!" said the young lady's admirer. "I observe that they attract the very gnats."

"I have noticed," said the Princess, "how many gnats there are this summer. The room here has been quite infested with them. But do see, they are all flying out as if they had some sudden business in hand."

And so they had. Titania had bidden them fly with the speed of thought throughout the city, carrying into every house and every place of human resort for business or pleasure, the words of a spell that would have over every work of man, the power given to the Fairy Mill-stones. In half an hour there was not a false thing devised by man in all the city, outside the gates of the palace, that was not fallen into dust. But when the gnats returned, Titania, who had remained alone within the ball-



room, hovered over the King's head. His Majesty was leading forward to the dance, the Princess on whose head a lover had admired the flowers.

Then the spell was spoken by Titania herself, and it was heard distinctly as a sharp and sudden wail by all the laughers and the dancers.

The King stared with terror when his partner's flowers fell in many-coloured dust over her face. Her gay dress, and the hoops below it, crumbled from an honest petticoat, while a white powder on her arms, and a red powder on her cheek, suddenly bred mites, that hopped with wonderful agility. His own ermine (wo be to the Royal Furrier!) was gone, and his royal dancing pumps had fallen into tinder.

The music ceased abruptly, for the minstrels were aghast at the sight upon which they looked down. False splendours had fallen into dust and rags. Paste jewels that covered the necessities of mighty dames, made emerald and ruby-coloured smears upon the brows and necks they had enriched. The rouge upon every cheek rotted, and bred active mites, that danced over the unfair whiteness of round arms and naked shoulders.

Terror spread, the dance broke up into ragged and slipshod confusion. The thick palace-walls had, by a false contractor, been filled up with rubble. They began to yield under the Fairy spell, and as they were seen to crumble, with wild shrieks the guests fled from the ball-room to the outer air.

Ragged, half-crumbled carriages were there in waiting, and astonished footmen, with their glories slurred. Much of the palace crumbled into dust,

and when the lords and ladies of Favilla reached their homes, sad was the common spectacle of ruin there.

The sublime Lord hurried away to hide himself in bed, and covered up his head with the half-rotten bed-clothes. Titania poured sleep over his pillow, and the Fairies gave him in an hour more dreams than he could have repeated in a day.

"My lords," he said next morning to his disgraced and broken-hearted Court, when half the city was in ruins and the people were in revolution. "I remember a time when you had dreams and I had none; now, at last, I have had my turn of dreaming, and I know my duty. Fetch me the Miller Sharp."

"Report is brought, Sire, that he has been found dead in the Fairy Mill."

"Let the guns of the fort be turned upon Sharp's mill, and let it be blown from the face of the earth. The Fairy Mill! We have dishonoured its truth. We have accepted false goods, and see how they bring us to shame, when suddenly they perish in the using. We have wrong to right. Freight a large ship with gold, for we owe long arrears of pay to Miller Blunt. My whole Court goes with me this morning to Blunt's mill."

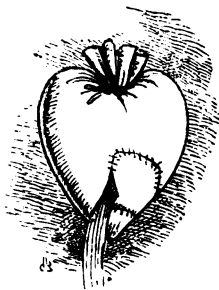
Then the King saw the plunder in the one mill, and the hog dead in his puddle. The guns of the fort were levelled, and Sharp's mill was swept from its hill-top. Within the rotten walls of the old mill he had forsaken, the sublime Lord saw enough to show how the extreme pinch of poverty had been endured by hearts fair, kind, and true.

“Gaffer Blunt,” he said, “henceforth you are my brother. Gammer Blunt, you are my sister. Through your mill, Favilla yet shall flourish.”

And the city, honestly built, did flourish, for the test of truth was applied without fear to all the fruit of a man’s labour. Very soon, therefore, few dared to meet it with a lie.

There was a brave and simple youth—he was not the King’s son—who suddenly and wilfully, when no man could be quick enough to stay him, leapt between the mill-stones to make evident the truth of his dear love for Althy; and he came out from his plunge, fresh and beautiful as a maid from her bath.

The old folks lived to weep with joy together on their daughter’s wedding-day. Soon afterwards they passed away, almost in the same hour. But when the Gaffer died, the old mill stopped. No wind would move its sails, and it fell altogether into ruin. But the Fairies were the play-fellows of Althy’s children.



## MR. FOX, STAGE MANAGER.

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IN a certain holiday time, two children put on motley, with the cap and bells, and built a booth for themselves, in the market-place. They would have simple frolic in their show, and signified as much by the gay standard cut into the outline of an ass's head, on which they displayed the name of their small playhouse. They tied their standard to a rough pole by a bunch of many-coloured ribbons, and had hung it round with the fool's bells, when a sly Fox came by.

"You are simple people," said the Fox, "if you expect any attention. Nobody now heeds your mere childish fun. Unless you can tell how to mix your trifles with a little cunning, pull the booth down, foolish little folk."

"We are not at all cunning, Mr. Fox," the children said. "We are fresh out of school, and mean pure holiday."

"Then," said the Fox, "I'll tell you what to do. Play what you will, only engage me for stage manager. I am known for a Slyboots. Let me ask the public to walk up, or let me be seen to whisk my tail a little now and then, and never fear. All the world has a respect for folly, when 'tis hinted that a Fox is at the bottom of it."

## ONE OF THE UNAPPRECIATED.

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A POODLE who sought to make himself respected, yelped and howled continually. "Observe," he said to a friendly bull-dog, "how men and beasts are excited when they hear my roar."

"But," asked his friend, "why is it that you get so many kicks?"

"My royal nature," Poodle said, "is too apparent to the envious race of men. Distinguished as I am by an excess of mane from common lions, why do they clip my body and hind legs, except only the tuft at my tail, unless it is that I may be as other lions are. You may well ask why do they carry envy farther, and pursue me with their buffets and revilings! Beasts truly royal are not honoured here. O, that I had been born in Africa! Then should I have grown to the full stature of my kindred, and my voice would not have been ruined, as it has been, by this horrid climate."

"I am born out of my time," says Nullity. "O, that I had lived in any but this chilling, calculating, nineteenth century! Then would my roar not have been reviled, then would my royalty have come to its full growth."—The Poodle!

To each land its creatures; to each day its thoughts. To every true voice its power.



## SOLID THOUGHT.

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DOCTOR PHANTOM was an Alchemist who had spent nearly all his life in looking anxiously at smoke that rose out of his furnaces, at liquids bubbling in his retorts, and strange figures drawn upon his walls with Hebrew letters scattered over them. He peered into all these results of his abstrusest reading and most cunning thought, expecting daily that the great discovery he sought, would appear

suddenly from one of them. But his smoke stung him in the eye, his boiling compounds burst their retorts, and the strange characters he drew upon his walls seemed to be charms that attracted to his laboratory all the rats, mice, beetles, woodlice, blue-bottles, worms and spiders, within ten miles of his house.

Thus, after long, weary years of watching, that had yielded him only daily disappointments and mishaps, Phantom acquired a habit of regarding everything as if it were a boiling retort that certainly might yield his Elixir, and was therefore to be watched most nervously, but that most probably was upon the point of exploding in his face, and therefore could not be faced without flinching.

"Thought! Thought! Thought! And this is the issue," said the dreamy old Philosopher one day, as he lay wringing his hand in the midst of the ruins of his furnace. It had just blown itself up, and with a flying cinder touched a jar of detonating powder on a distant shelf, whereby it was assisted in conveying Doctor Phantom's roof into the sky. Not a spider had gone with the roof. Not a blue-bottle had been silenced by the shock that knocked the miserable Doctor down. For his spiders and his blue-bottles, his rats and his mice, his worms and his beetles, and his frogs, and all the other creatures that were spinning, crawling, hopping, running all day long, and all night long, upon his walls and floor and implements and clothes, were so many evil-minded imps and wicked Fairies drawn about him by his written spells.

"Thought! Thought! Empty thought!" he moaned; "I have been twisting my brains into spider's web with constant thought, and still have nothing in my grasp. Ah! would that thought were possession! Then how great would my wealth be!"

"You may have that wish," said a huge, shadowy creature, rough all over with fiery hair. It stood outside the Doctor's laboratory, and with arms folded on the top of the wall, was looking down upon him through the great hole made by the uptearing of the roof.

"Ah! ah!" cried the Doctor, looking up at him with curious, scared eyes. "What thing are you?"

"A thing you have just loosened from prison. You melted my fetters, and I burst abroad. If I have broken your furnace, and pushed off your roof, I am quite ready to pay you for the damage. Shall I pay you with your wish—make you a solid thinker? Is thought to be no longer wearying desire, but swift accomplishment of all that comes into your mind?"

"Yes, yes."

"You are paid for the hurt to your roof, then," said the creature, as it vanished.

The Doctor hardly heeded him. "Yes," he went on, "yes, but— Why are these spiders and things, and the very blue-bottles in the air all motionless, all looking at me so intently? If they were away (All vanished),—and I had my furnace again—(It was there, quietly burning),—and if the roof were



not blown off—(The roof was in its place again),—  
I might now discover the Elixir.”

The Elixir of Life, with its name written on the bottle that contained it, stood before him.

The Alchemist's eyes flashed with a wild joy. “The Elixir!” he cried. “My hope achieved at once! O, I could hug my benefactor!” Blowing the roof in, the wild being entered the laboratory, and flung himself between the arms of the philosopher. The poor man's knees trembled, and he thought he should sink into the very earth for dread, when down he went, as if a trap-door suddenly had fallen under him.

Stunned, amazed, deprived of thought, the Doctor sank until a sense of suffocation raised a spasm of longing to be in the air. Then up he went, like an arrow, through the earth, and through the last hole in his laboratory roof. He brushed against an eagle, and struck off some of his wing-feathers, in flying as a bird-bolt up towards the clouds.

“Mercy!” he cried, when he could gasp. And as he thought, “Alas! alas! earth, air,—I shall be plunged in water next,” he was immediately in the sea.

But the plunge-bath cleared his mind a little, and he had wit to make Home his next thought, then to think and have for his old home a palace, full of wealth, and numerous retainers, who were but his old friends, the worms and beetles, in another shape.

“Who is my major domo?” he asked.

A round, and most respectable domestic, in a

brown suit, who had lately been conspicuous enough in the laboratory as a big-bellied spider, approached with respect.

"Let me have my meals served properly, at fitting times," ordered the Doctor. "I will take them in my bed-room. Let everything be so done that I may have no thought to take myself about the matters of the house." Then he resolved within himself to go to bed, and leave off thinking. Instantly he was undressed, and tucked up in his bed, an idiot.

But, as an idiot, his mind was tainted by his old vocation, and no magic power could hinder him from raving about the Elixir. "Elixir of Life!" was his cry, when his first meal was brought to him, and he was fed with spoons by his attendants. The Elixir of Life instantly came in its bottle to his bed-side.

Then the poor Doctor made a sign, which was interpreted as his desire to drink of the Elixir. It was poured into a goblet, and presented to his lips. The strong desire of his life in the moment of its accomplishment, broke the bands in which he had confined his mind. He gazed at the cup, as he had gazed of old at his great bubbling retorts, with scared eyes of expectation. Shuddering as he took the draught of life into his hands, "What if it be Death!" he thought. And as he drank he died.

## THE TOUCH OF NATURE.

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"I AM brilliant," said a Frog, "and harmless, yet although I jump for joy all my life long, men will not be my friends. They give my name of Croaker to the dreariest of their own kind, and shudder if they touch my skin, though it is softer than a woman's!"

"That all comes of your being a reptile," said the melancholy Bittern.

"But I am a gay reptile that hurts nobody and pipes away the night."

"It is not, poor creature, what you are that is the question. When they hear my boom in the waste places—"

"Yea," cried the Frog, impatiently, "What creature is more dismal than the Bittern? Yet men like to hear you!"

"That," answered the Bittern, "is because warm-blooded dreariness abounds among themselves. But you are a cold-blooded wretch. When they touch you they shudder as they think of their own reptile class, that is so slippery and does not warm under a friendly grasp. That also may be harmless as the frogs. I see little of men, and know only that they shrink from one another when —"

"Say no more," said the quick little questioner, "'Tis sympathy. How I should jump if I were touched by a warm frog!"



## BRED UPON GOLD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE DEAREST PET.

THE poorest woman in the land, a long way off, and a long time ago, became the mother of a leathery little bag of a child, that would take nothing into its mouth, and yet remained alive. She discussed the baby's case five hours a day for a twelvemonth, with all her gossips. There were ten

other children of hers, all with empty stomachs; but then these were hungry stomachs, as became their station. The eleventh child, though it appeared to consist mainly of stomach, opened its mouth, and cried continually, as if wanting food; but instantly rejected everything that was offered.

At last, there came by the door an old pedlar, with two feet of beard, and spectacles that gathered the light from the eyes behind them into a couple of burning points, that would set fire to tinder a few inches before his nose, and burn black little holes through anything to which his face came very near.

"That is a curious bag of a child that you have in your arms," he said. "What may you have been wishing for before it came?"

"Just everything, master," said the woman; "then as now. We can buy nothing of you, for we have no money. I used, sometimes, to get ravenous and half mad through poverty, and long, as a dog for a bone, to bite, and crunch, and swallow the gold we can never get at all. It's very hard!"

"Very hard to bite such meat?"

"No; very hard to suffer such sore want of meat."

"Ah, dear me," said the pedlar; "and to have such a costly baby, too, that can be bred only on gold. Will you oblige me with a spoon?"

The poor woman had but a wooden ladle in the house, and this she brought. The pedlar filled its bowl with bright gold pieces, and put it to the baby's lips. The child swallowed them with relish, and then uttered an eager cry for more. The pedlar

took the child from its terrified mother, opened his pack, and, dipping the ladle into a box of gold coins that was in one corner of it, fed little Pursy with the whole of its contents. Then, for the first time in its life, this infant closed its eyes, and slept.

"Sir, sir," said the mother, "what have you done? I told you we were poor. You have put money enough to feed us all for life into the child's stomach. It is gone. What will you do? What can I do?"

"My good woman," said the pedlar, "a kind action is its own reward. I have given your child its first meal, and shown you what is the only sort of spoon-meat it will take. I make your child a present of that little breakfast, and am glad to see that he already looks the better for it. Feed him well, my dear friend, feed him well, and he will be a credit to you all."

"Could you spare his mother, for the other children, one, only one, gold piece?"

"I am sorry to see that I have given the dear baby of yours all, to the last drachm."

The pedlar shouldered his pack, and departed. Presently, the woman's husband came home to his dinner, and there was but half a loaf of bread for all the family.

"There is a fortune of gold in the baby's stomach," she said, and she told her tale.

"I have noticed," said the father, "that when babies have had a full meal they sometimes return part of it unexpectedly. Let us hope it will be so with little Pursy here. Perhaps it would not be a

sin to tickle him a little bit, or jolt him into the least morsel of a fit of hiccups."

All was in vain. Little Pursy, who had hitherto been crying day and night, and never, until then, kept anything inside him, now rejoiced in being tickled, crowed when he was shaken, and allowed nothing to drop out of his mouth.

In the evening, when the children of the household were in bed, and even Pursy slept, the parents took counsel together. "We are too poor, they said, "to keep a child that must be bred on gold ; but he is our own child, and we must provide for him if possible." Then it occurred to them that the King's wife was childless, and was a fantastic lady, who attached herself to pets of many kinds. The baby was a curiosity, and would be all the more prized by a Queen, for its exceeding costliness. They would take little Pursy to the palace, and endeavour to obtain for him a situation in the Paradise of Pets.

So, in the morning, the poor people put on their best clothes, and taking with them all their eleven children, went to Court. The Queen of that country had a castle of her own outside the gates of the capital, full of objects upon which she lavished much of her affection. There the King visited her constantly and spent his holidays, but as the nation was large, and he transacted personally all his business, his holidays were very short. When Pursy's father and mother arrived at the castle gate and pulled the bell, there was heard from within a wild uproar of barking, mingled with wild screams that alarmed them very much. The door was opened by a negro

boy, two feet high, wearing a loose dress of orange-coloured velvet, and a turban of green muslin spangled with gold stars. He grinned, and showed two fine rows of white teeth, as five hundred little spaniels and terriers, all small and very fat, each barking savagely, waddled out to attack the strangers in the legs. They were quieted by a word from the negro, and came in with the poor people and their children, who found entrance easy when they had explained that they came with the present of a new pet to the Queen. The walls of the entrance-hall were entirely lined with bright parrots, macaws, and parroquets, fidgetting and shrieking on their perches. The five hundred dogs, while the visitors stood in waiting, ranged themselves in a circle round them, looking up with expectant eyes, and open, quickly panting mouths, brushing the floor all the while with busy tails, as if each dog had reason to believe that meat was to be looked for.

And so it was. The mischievous page had intentionally placed the strangers under the trap-door through which, since it was mid-day, the dinner of the dogs would presently descend. In a few minutes it rained roast meat and potatoes, and the dogs rushed into wild scramble, but the poor little children, upon whom it never until then had rained roast meat, claimed their part of the fattening shower. Even the hungry father picked up a large piece of meat, and was putting it to his mouth, when a pair of heavy hands seemed to descend upon each of his shoulders, and a whiskered head bent forward to snap it from his fingers. It was the friendly and



familiar act of a tame tiger, but the poor man roared with alarm, when he perceived what paws were on his back.

The page returned, and beckoned to Pury's father, mother, brothers and sisters, all bestained as they now were with gravy and potato meal, to follow him. The tiger joined the party, and when they were ascending the steps that led to a first suite of rooms, a pet lamb, chased by a pet terrier, rushed suddenly between the unlucky father's legs and threw him back upon the nose of the tremendous pet who stalked behind. He heard an angry growl and felt a severe pinch under his coat tails, that hurried him on to the front of the procession.

The first chamber of the suite, spread every morning with clean sand, contained the Queen's falcons, hence they went through wire gates into a room full of humming birds, which opened upon a delicious garden, and through this garden they were led to a carp-pond, beside which her Majesty reclined, with many fish attendant on the movements of her pretty little hand. Twenty ladies of her Court were about her, each of them with a litter of small kittens in her lap. A steward of her household stood beside her, cap in hand, with a black swan under his arm that made efforts not wholly unsuccessful to peck bits of skin out of his face.

"Tell Belt," said her Majesty, as she dismissed the steward, "that I will keep these six dozen kittens, but he is to send no more, except white ones. Order me, also, another thousand of white mice. I will buy the swan. Take it at once to the

Lake, and do not be so rough with it. You see how it is angered."

Her steward having departed, the Queen turned to little Pursy's parents. What had they brought? Then the poor mother told her story and produced her child. The Queen pulled out her purse and put all the gold in it, bit by bit, into little Pursy's mouth. It was taken with much relish, and as the child cried for more when the Queen's pocket was empty, her Majesty bade one of the ladies put the kittens down and go to her treasurer for a fresh hundred of gold pieces. These Pursy ate more easily than any man ever ate oysters. Great was her Majesty's delight. She declared that she should be feeding him all the day long, for O, he was the dearest pet. And so he was.

The young Queen, whose name was Pearl, desired to buy this baby of its mother, and its father was most willing that it should be sold. But the poor woman declared that it was her own child and that she could not part with it for ever. She would be most grateful if her Majesty would rear it and be gracious to it, but, refused to bargain for its sale. Her only bargain was, that she might not be thought too bold, if she came now and then to see how the boy throve.

The boy did thrive. He was a toy, costly enough to be worthy of a Queen. Even the Queen Pearl found it necessary to restrict his diet to four meals a day, with an allowance of one hundred gold pieces at each; except his dinner, when he was allowed two hundred and fifty. There was need for Pursy of a

mistress with the wealth of a whole kingdom near her hand. For him, Pearl had to reduce also her outlay upon other pets, and the King was not ill-pleased when, after a few years, he found himself lord paramount in his wife's paradise. The wonderful child adopted by her Majesty had in a manner swallowed up all other favourites, and he cost so much that Pearl had always money to beg of the King, and therefore was as a wife continually fond and gracious. Thus the adopted child became a bond of love between his Majesty and her Majesty; and it was but reasonable, therefore, that their Majesties should both treat him with favour.

## CHAPTER II.

### GOLD AND THE RIGHT.

THE Royal favour held by him so long that when this pet became a man they made an Earl of him. Very portly he was, and a man of strength in Hungerland. The king of Hungerland regarding him as his own son, said to him when he was of age, "Earn your own living now, my boy. Earl Pursy I create you, and through you I shall transact all my affairs of state. The labour I impose on you is great. Consider it your business in life; see that you do not neglect it; and remember, that by it you have to live."

Evil was the day for Hungerland when this Earl Pursy took the helm of state affairs. Do what he

might, men grovelled before him, mere eater of gold that he was, a creature who respected nothing but his own food, and who would estimate whatever man came into his presence by the fatness of his moneybags alone. There were many, indeed, who scorned him; but of those who did so, nearly all were poor.

Chief of Earl Pursy's worshippers, was one of the poor, his mother, a thin woman who now had streaks of silver in her hair, who had become a widow and who was working, in the midst of all her other children, to maintain with honesty an anxious life. It was a proud thing for her that a son of hers was steersman of the state. She was but one who worshipped from afar. She would not hurt his golden prospects by the thrusting of her sordid figure on the scene.

It happened, however, one day, that a fierce Baron Nehmen took forcible possession of a farm which, by long years of industry, she and her children had acquired. It was not far from the hovel in which Pursy had been born, and it was the only source of food to her whole household. Drury her eldest daughter was betrothed to a rich shepherd's son, and being as good as she was pretty, was to marry him with the consent of his father when her mother could give her thirty gold pieces as dowry. This sum she had by much privation at length saved, and when her homestead was seized, and she was forced to fly to her old hovel again, the good woman escaped with her daughter's dowry hidden in her bosom.

It was in vain that Drury bade her spend this

gold, which was her own, for the relief of pressing wants. "Let me see you married, child," she said, "and I shall have, at least, two children in comfort."

"Then listen to me, mother," said Drury. "If you will not go with me, I shall go by myself to brother Pursy. We have been wickedly wronged, and he has power to right us. Let the Baron Nehmen see to it!"

"Well, my dear," said the mother, "I think that a great statesman, who has so much to carry as my Pursy, ought not to be hindered by his family affairs. He could not do us right, without having it said that he judged partially, and wronged one of the great barons to please his mother. What we have done once, we can do twice. We earned our way out of this hovel into yonder farm. Why cannot we earn our way again into another farm."

"And you now getting to be old, mother!" said Drury.

"What then? My children have grown older too, and are now strong, if I am weak. There is more strength than there used to be, among us all."

"Good bye, then, mother," Drury said. "I go alone."

The daughter being wilful, there was no help for it; the mother must be with her to protect her, and the simple soul put on the gayest clothes she had, in which to appear worthily before her noble son. But these poor people tramped to Court on foot. The Baron, when he heard they had set out,

galloped on horseback thither, waving his cap to them gaily as he passed them on the road.

So the Baron arrived first, and when he came to audience of Earl Pursy, found him closeted with a foreign physician, then at the Court of Hungerland.

This was an old man, with a large beard, who was robed in an ample suit of the white foxes' skins. His eyes shone with so much power through his spectacles, that their rays met in a couple of burning points, a few inches before his nose. The Earl's physician withdrew to the recess of a window when the Baron entered.

The Baron Nehmen's suit was ended quickly. A woman would come with complaint that he had seized her farm. He brought assurance of his innocence, he said, and placed two hundred gold pieces upon a table. He could testify on oath that he had bought this farm. The Earl lay sick upon a couch, and, with a re-assuring word, dismissed the Baron.

"I warn you not to devour that," said the physician, pointing to the gold, as the door closed. "Your life was saved by the stab from which you are recovering. If you were not surrounded by men thirsting for your blood, who lie in wait, not always in vain, to hack and hew at you, you would long since have died of repletion. You owe life to the daggers and the hatchets of assassins, who are bent on giving you the bleedings that you will not take from your physician."

"A man who bleeds doubloons may dread the

lancet," replied Pursy, as he ate a handful of the Baron's coins.

"Beware, Lord Pursy," the physician said. "You live till you have passed your utmost stretch. By frequent and free bleeding only is your life to be maintained. You have, since your last wound, been living richly here at home. That bag of gold may be the meal that kills you."

"We will see, doctor, we will see," he said.

In ten minutes he had devoured all the gold, and rose from his couch, panting a little, to put on the cap in which he carried his great feather, and to buckle his sword to his side. Strutting stiffly and uneasily about the room, he bade the doctor note that he had life in him still.

Some days later, the footsore mother reached town, with her best clothes travel-stained, and leaning on the plump arm of her daughter Drury. When they came to the Earl's door they were refused entrance. "Say," said Drury, to the dismay of her mother, "that his lordship's eldest sister and his mother wait his leisure in the hall." An old gentleman in spectacles, who wore a robe of the white foxes' skins, passed at that moment down the stairs.

"Pedlar!" cried the poor woman.

The physician smiled at her, and said, "I am come to conduct you to your son. I have good eyes, and saw that you were coming."

"You are my boy's friend?"

"Do not doubt me. I am interested in your son. The magic books, in which I study the great

wonders of nature, have made of the wide sky a looking-glass, in which I see reflected clearly all that happens under it. When your boy was resisting your attempts to give him ordinary human nursing, it pleased me to exercise my art on studies of his nature. To so great a curiosity I was, of course, attracted, and my interest in him is deep. I hang over him but as a student of the fields hangs over a rare herb."

"As you will, as you will, sir. Is he well?"

"His life," said the physician, "is in peril. He will not moderate his appetite. His body is now overloaded with crude gold. Whenever a fresh coin goes to his mouth, I tremble for him."

"Poor dear!" said the mother. "Glutton!" said the sister. But they both begged to be taken to him.

When they were introduced by the physician, Pursy stood erect, and, with a jaunty air that was a little fierce, demanded who those people were. When he was told, he answered proudly that he was Queen Pearl's adopted son, and knew no other mother than the Queen.

"For shame, Sir," said sister Drury; but the mother broke upon her speech with praises of Queen Pearl. "How good she was to you! But now she has a child of her own"—

"A common, puling brat, not ten months old!" cried the Earl, angrily. "Do you bid me fear it?"

"Fear it, bless your heart, dear," said the poor woman. "Of course it is the darling joy of all the Court. Only I think now the good Queen will not grudge a bit of your heart to your mother."



The Earl held his fat sides and gasped.

"Help him, dear doctor!" said the woman.

"Nonsense," said Drury. "It is nothing but a spasm of pride or jealousy at the poor little Crown Prince. Lord Pursy, I do not claim to be your sister, but I ask you, as the man of power in the state, to compel a robber to make restitution of a widow's house that he has swallowed up." Then she told the Earl by what base violence and open wrong his mother had been driven back in poverty to her old hovel.

"What have you to show in support of your petition?"

"Send to the spot and hear the evidence of all our neighbours."

"Is that all?"

"Confront us with the Baron. Send for him."

"He has already deposited in court two hundred gold pieces. Do you plead with empty pockets?"

"Alas, my dear boy," said the mother, "I have saved nothing out of the wreck except the thirty gold pieces that are your sister Drury's little dowry. But I hear that you receive too much. All this rich food may be the death of you, my child."

"That is well," sneered the Earl. "Go on. My food is my poison, certainly."

"Come away, mother," Drury said, "Do you wait for your son to spit upon you? Gold is the food of us all, Earl Pursy, but Death waits at the table of the glutton. Wise men do not accuse gold. It is to them a stepping-stone, and only to the fool a burden."

"Little wise as you are, Mistress Drury," said the Earl, "it is not a weight under which you are likely to be crushed."

Then he knocked upon his table and a page came who was sent to call his secretary. His mother knew that he was about to have an order written for the restoration of their property. But when his secretary came, Earl Pursy said, "See that these women are confined in prison for a fortnight before they are sent back to the place from which they came."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DEATH OF THE LORD PURSY.

THE Earl's enemies went, therefore, to Queen Pearl as she sat with the heir-apparent crowing in her lap, and told her how her favourite had sent his mother and his sister to a gaol, when they came pleading to him for justice against a strong oppressor. Her Majesty had at that time a very high sense of a mother's dignity, and was already become weary of the complaints laid against her costly friend. She therefore caused the two women to be secretly brought into her presence. Then having heard very plain truth told by the younger of them; having been touched also by the natural and honest ebullition of the elder woman upon coming into presence of the Royal Baby, which declared itself much pleased with her behaviour; Pearl persuaded the King utterly to disgrace their favourite.

The whole Court exulted at Earl Pursy's sudden fall. His mother and sister, released by the King's command, were sent home with a troop of the King's soldiers, who had orders to execute a royal warrant against Baron Nehmen. They took with them, also, partly as a prisoner, the discarded favourite, who was sent back to the home from which he had been taken.

Their Majesties declared that the Earl Pursy was to be thenceforward his mother's slave. She was to have rights of life and death over him. Because he had spurned her, he should be her chattel. What foolish rights were they to give to one who was the simplest and the tenderest of women! She had forgiven her son's cruelty before the prison door was fairly locked upon her. When she was set free and heard the royal mandate, she feared much that her own company would be unwelcome to her son, but had agreed to take him back to her, lest hurt should come to him among his enemies. The cost of his keep would, for some time, be nothing, as the physician had assured her that his hope of long life lay in a complete starvation for the next few years.

Pursy, deprived not only of his earldom, but even of the feather in his cap, and of his sword, sulked boorishly during the journey. When they arrived at the family hovel in which they were to sleep for only one night more, because the farm was to be theirs again next day, Pursy laid himself down in a corner with a sullen face, and shut his eyes. The mother sobbed, and was not to be comforted until her thoughts were diverted by the arrival of the

shepherd's son who came to welcome Drury back. The whisperings of the lovers were a pleasant music by which her sore heart was comforted again.

When the moon was high, the shepherd lad went to his own home, and Drury went up carolling to her small chamber. The other sons and daughters had retired already, and the widow, with a tender, parting look at her disgraced son, who had wrapped his cloak about him and lay still upon the floor, went to her prayers.

But when the moon was higher, Pursy was alone afoot within the house. With stealthy tread he passed from shelf to cupboard. There was gold under the roof he knew. The thirty pieces laid by for his sister's dowry, never had been touched. At last he touched them.

As he did so, the bright eyes of his physician, who, unable to conquer curiosity about the creature that it was his whim to study, had been following the troop from Court, shone through the lattice.

The physician uttered a weird cry when Pursy thrust the gold into his mouth. For he choked as he swallowed it, and falling from the shelf to which he had climbed, burst like a rotten money-bag into a heap of gold, that glistened like red wet blood in the moonlight.

## A RHYME OF MIGHT AND RIGHT.

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PRIDE parted them. They were immortal born,  
Twin children of Eternity. Their bond  
Of strength was in their brotherhood. But scorn  
Of an associate too meek and fond  
Left the soft sister in a glen, forlorn,  
To sing, and hope,—for Truth cannot despond,—  
When Dynamis, departing from her side,  
Went forth by despots to be deified.

At birth to her this deathless attribute  
Of constancy, the great Creator gave.  
When her twin brother in the bold pursuit  
Of action suffered, she was made to save;—  
She to exist, and he to execute  
Heaven's will beneath her guidance. Ever brave  
But often building up the cause of wrong,  
Only Alethe made his building strong.

With even pace, and ever slowly, moved  
The maiden, constant to her forward way;  
While Dynamis with rapid impulse roved,  
And often from his sister's path would stray.  
Him found fatigued, she lovingly reproved,  
And, while he slept, upon the road would stay  
To watch his slumber, and with song and kiss  
To bring refreshment to her Dynamis.

His strength of hand, to aid her strength of heart,  
Alethe needed in her wandering,  
Nor ever could she from one spot depart  
Unless with her that brother she might bring,  
But, waiting till he should from sleep upstart,  
Beneath the night her music she would sing.  
Where he deserted her she would remain,  
Hoping, until he came to her again.



## THE CLEAR HEAD.

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At the Court of Grig the Thirty-ninth, nobody was in more credit than the Marquis Polypody. He was a stately man, with a conical bald crown, and a great concave nose. When he spoke his lips worked soberly, they never played. There was no person alive to whom the Marquis Polypody ever had betrayed his thoughts. His was too clear a head for that.

The Marquis Polypody's head was clear of brains, and from the walls of its empty cave reverberated the opinions of whatever person might at any moment happen to address him. But the reverberation had in it a sonorous rumble, giving it an air of great originality.

His Lordship always kept an even countenance. All who were about him, except the mere jokers of the Court, were flattered by the very serious way in which he received, as if it were a matter of great moment, any sort of communication made within his hearing. Jokers, indeed, were disposed to laugh at this, but dared not. Who was so happy as the poet, when he was allowed to dedicate his idleness to the clear-headed Marquis Polypody. Such a name prefixed to his vain dreamings, gave them an air of reality. The man of science gladly recognised the value of his own discoveries when his hope that they might serve his country, rumbled back upon him from within the cavernous head of the great Marquis, as a positive assurance that his country was much served by his discoveries. As for negotiation, at that he was admitted to be first in the known world. He could handle a napkin or receive a snuff-box irreproachably. He could negotiate an empty peace, with the deliberation that would give it value. He could baffle the acutest of ambassadors who sought to find out what he knew. For he had the sublime way of knowing nothing, creakily and slowly, that enables its possessor to look blandly down on the possessor of mere everyday wisdom, that moves cheerily with an undignified brisk trot.

During many reigns, the palace occupied by Grig the Thirty-ninth, had been infested by a swarm of Fairies. They were good-natured, but inconveniently frolicsome. It pleased them to be on too familiar terms with the King and the high officers of the Court, and to disturb business with ill-timed freaks of folly. Grig the Thirty-eighth had ordered all those parts of the palace which were supposed to be the special haunts of these meddlesome creatures to be closed, and in the other chambers and halls, he had hung every object to which power was ascribed of offending the good people and driving them away. They did not take offence, for it was not their humour; but they were really in want of a hole to creep into that they could call their own.

One day two little Fairies, Aspid and Lastrea, chasing one another, ran into the caverns of the Marquis Polypody's nose, and found how they communicated with the greater cavern of his head. Away therefore they ran to report to their comrades that the Marquis's head had nothing at all in it, and that the fine large cave under his skull afforded room enough to lodge them all. Then all the Fairies ran together to the hole which had thus been found for them.

The Marquis Polypody chanced to be at supper with the King, in the King's private cabinet, courteously returning to him his opinions in the form of counsel, when, through all the gates of his senses—eyes, nose, ears, and mouth—there happened the grand rush of Fairies to the cave under his skull. The elfin people, full of glee when they



perceived its airiness and roominess, abandoned themselves to mad gambolling, and brushed violently and continually against the pia mater lining their apartment.

The poor Marquis! His Majesty was on the point of tears over the story of a pressure put upon him by his subjects, that was inconsistent with his kingly dignity, when the bewildered statesman, leaning back in his chair, said—

“Cheer up, Grig!”

“My lord?” stammered his Majesty.

“Cheer up! Take another glass of wine.

“Behave as a Grig!

Dash off your wig!

Any pig may be big,

But a fig for the Grig

Who don't chirp! chirp! chirp! chirp! chirrup!”

“Conduct the Marquis Polypody to his own apartments,” the King said to the attendants. “His mind,” he thought, “has been overtaxed by State affairs. I will send my physician to him.”

But an Elf, who peeped through one of my Lord's eyes, reported what was passing to her friends inside. The Fairies then all ceased their tumbling, and, while Aspid rushed away to tickle the King, cunning Lastrea whispered words that rumbled gently out of the Clear Head.

“Forgive me, Sire. There was, a minute ago, a sudden whirling in my head, that has now passed away. I never before felt it. While it lasted, I

seem to have been mad. But now I am again your faithful and respectful servant."

Aspid was sitting in the royal ear.

"Rest yourself, my Lord Polypody," said the King, with an affectionate smile, as he dismissed the man in waiting. "You work too hard in our service. The whirlpool in your head, I think, my Lord, brought me up one of your deep thoughts in a wild way. We might be merrier, without being less wise. See now, my wig is laid aside. What say you, my Lord? Shall we chirp?"

Thereupon, King and statesman sat over the fire together cosily, and the good little Fairies, who had a mind to maintain the credit of the house they occupied, poured so much frank and earnest talk out of the statesman's head, that Grig the Thirtyninth took leave of him with an embrace, and declared that he would hold a Cabinet Chirp with him three times a week.

When my lord the Marquis went to bed, the kind little creatures in his cranium amused themselves with acting dainty dreams for his amusement. There was a tone of friendliness about them all that gave a perfectly new sort of movement to his lips when, in the morning, he sat at his breakfast with the Marchioness, and with his son and daughter.

"Wife," he said to the Marchioness, "it will be late before we meet again. What if we chatter as we did when we were young?"

The Marchioness opened her eyes very widely, for my lord usually buried his nose at breakfast-time in a big book, that was one of his properties.

"Husband," she answered, "if you have leisure, and are well disposed, I wish you would hear what our son Filix there must, sooner or later, tell you."

The Fairies crowded to both eyes of the Lord Polybody, and looked out of them as the son spoke, while a swarm of Fairies took possession of his Lordship's tongue, ready to manage it when fit occasion came. The Fairies looking out of my Lord's eyes, gave them so gentle an appearance that the boy spoke from his heart.

"I have gone astray, dear father," he said ; "have found at the Court evil counsellors, and am in debt ; in the toils also of false friends. I looked for You, sometimes, when you have been busy, or have seemed to be so far above my foolishness, that I dared not open my soul to you ; but now"—

Here the Fairies began working the great tongue.

"Now, my boy, you find that your father is of one clay with yourself, stiff with a few more years of age, but of one piece with you. To whom shall a son look for a partner in his proud and happy thoughts, to whom, on earth, shall he go for help in trouble, if not to his father ? When you get a wife, I will yield up to her the place of counsellor and comforter ; now, I divide it with your mother, boy. Speak to us fearlessly as to the people you may trust with all your mind. Why, fellow, we must needs love you, though you were the vilest upon earth !"

"Henceforth, father, my soul is open to you," said the youth.

"Take my confidence, also, papa, while you are

about it," said the daughter, Aemula. "I had agreed to run away to-morrow with the young lord Gymnogram, because I cannot marry your old friend the Marquis Polystick."

"Polystick is an ass, my dear," said the complaisant father. "Do not run away with Gymnogram, because he also is an ass. But \*marry neither."

"That is what I should like best," the daughter said.

"Exactly so," said his lordship. "Folly in me set on foot folly in you. Wait till an honest man shall love you, my dear Aemula; then make your father comfortable by accepting him."

"My dear," said the Marchioness to her husband, "some whisper arose in the palace from the servants' hall, about a touch of madness that appeared in you last night when dining with the King. Are you quite sure you are yourself this morning?"

"More myself, than I have been for years," said Polypody.

"Then," said his wife, "I also am more yours than I have been for years."

When the Marquis Polypody retired to his study, and would write, there sat a Fairy over the mouth of his ink-bottle.

"Out of the way, little mischief," he said, "or I shall dip my pen through you."

"Do," said the Fairy.

"You are quite in earnest about that?"

"Quite."

So my Lord Polypody's pen passed through

the Fairy Marattin, on its way into the ink-bottle, and the little creature took no stain when it came through him again on its way back full of ink.

But where now were the long State sentences he used to write? Had he quite lost the power of producing documents? Sentences, once as long as his whole body, could to-day be measured by his thumb. It was clear to him that if he wrote in this way, no more would be said about his head. "A child could understand this!" he cried, in despair, as he put his pen down.

"Not content?" asked the Fairy. "Will it not do to have your words jump straight out of your thoughts?"

The Fairy rose from the ink-bottle, and buzzed like a fly about the shelves. Instantly the Lord Polypody was attacked on all sides, by the firing of great round words at him, out of holes in the backs of his books. The books of the sweet singers of his land, and of the wise and witty of old time, with a fair number that his neighbours had written, were all quiet and unbroken. But there were still batteries of volumes that hailed words about his head. In five minutes the storm was over, and the bindings were all whole again; but many of the works had shrunk to a third, or even to a twentieth of their old size.

"Now, my Lord Marquis," said Marattin; "read your books, and learn of them. The wordiness is gone, the repetitions are all gone, the affectations are all gone. No sage will impose on you with

dulness, in the name of profound thought. No jester will ask you to laugh, except when he has really gladness of his own to share. Your books of fancy have spat out all the doll metaphors, and retain only those which were born of the life within a writer's mind."

The company in Polypody's head had all been looking out at the performance of their comrade, and when it was over left their windows to plunge into a dance of which the measure tingled down into the Lord Marquis's legs. But he restrained himself. Standing up with his back to the fire, he was drumming a minuet tune with his toes upon the rug when his wife entered. Then he forgot his years and kissed her as he would have kissed her thirty years ago. Off went the Fairies in their dance again, and now the Marquis took his lady by the hand, and still humming his own music, fairly set her to dance with him in his minuet.

Here was, indeed, good sport for all the playfellows. They gave themselves up to it joyously, and manned so cleverly the out-works of their cavern, that the Marquis very soon found love and trust thrust on him from every side. Men and women of all ranks and in all forms of difficulty, came to him with unsealed lips asking for human sympathy and counsel.

But it happened that the daily stir of the Fairies in the Marquis Polypody's empty skull, tickling the pia mater, produced from it a development of brain. The brain grew and began to fill his head. At last it pressed so much upon the colony by which that

cavern had been held, that Aspid and Lastrea were sent out to look for a new place of settlement. And Polypody's brains continued to encroach on them so rapidly that even before they knew where next they were to settle, all the Fairies flew away.



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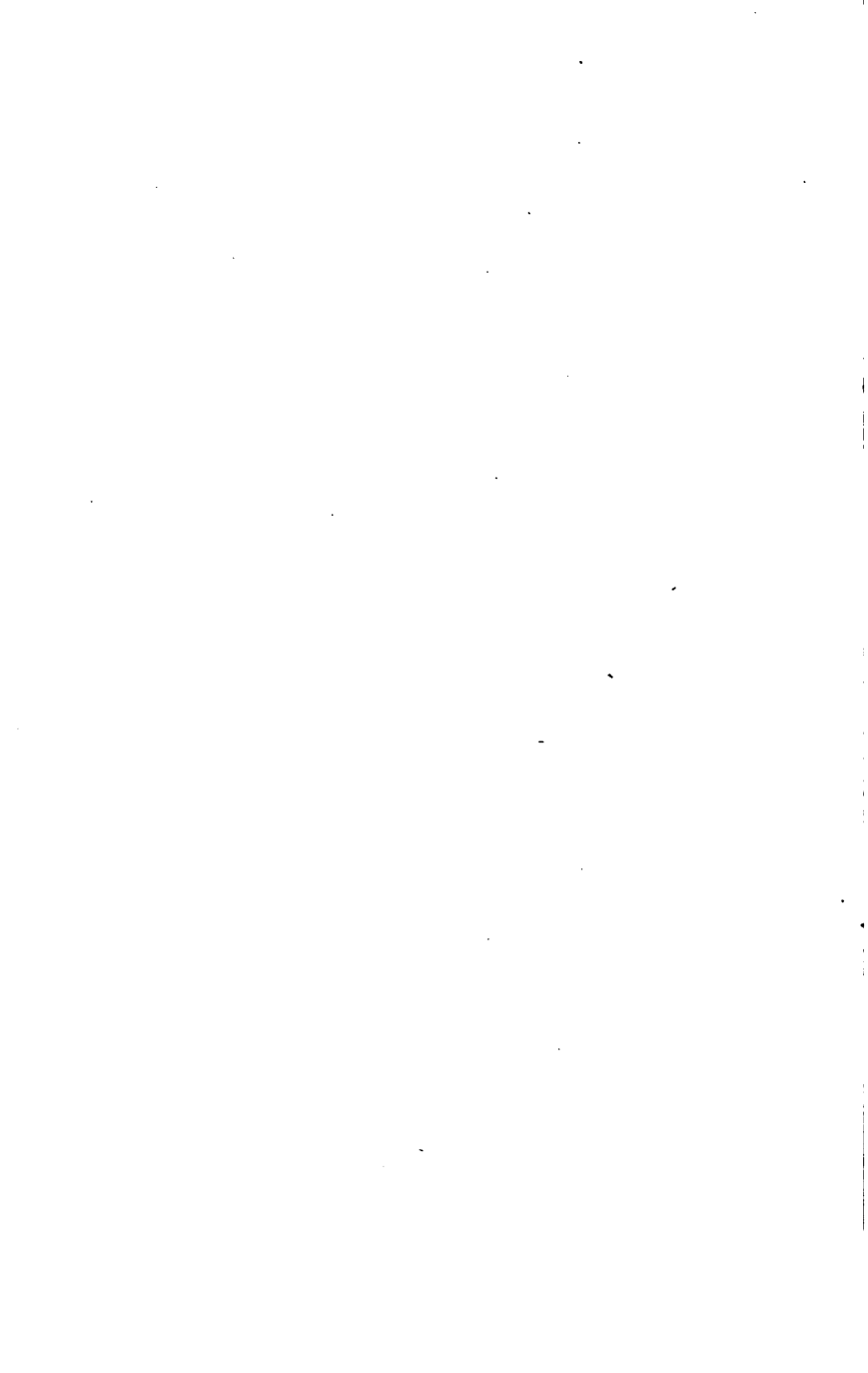
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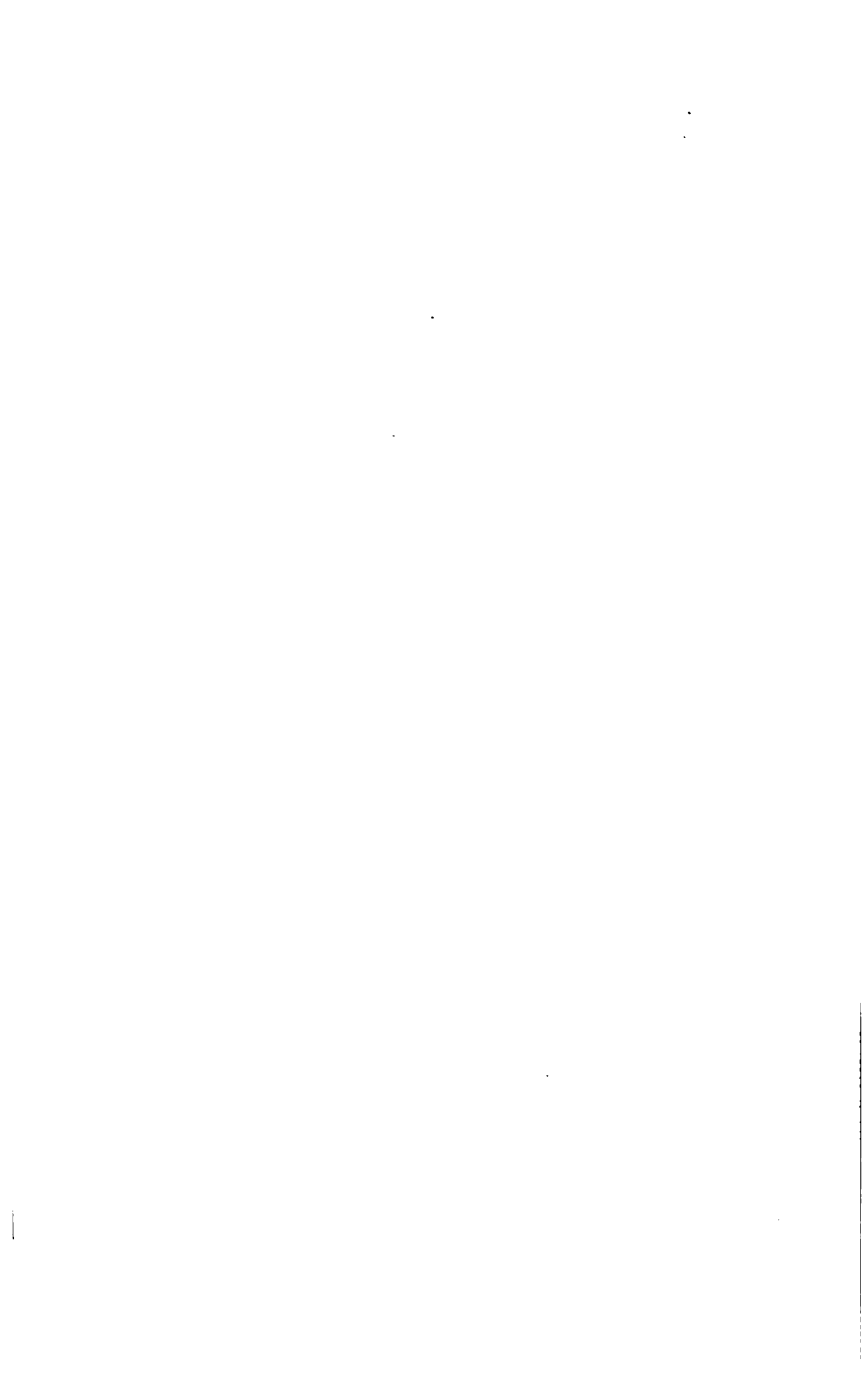
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